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TEACHER EDUCATION AT A DISTANCE: EXPLORING MEANINGS THROUGH DIALOGUES WITH NEPALESE TEACHERS

BY
ROSHAN CHITRAKAR

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN
PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

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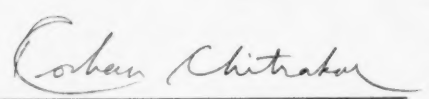

Roshan Chitrakar
Bhatbhatenee
Ward No. 5, Kathmandu Municipality
Bagmatee Zone, Nepal

November 15, 1994

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read , and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled Teacher Education at a Distance: Exploring Meanings through Dialogues with Nepalese Teachers submitted by Roshan Chitrakar in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Dr. Kenneth Jacknicke, Supervisor

Dr. Larry Beauchamp

Dr. Margaret Haughey

Dr. Terrance Carson

Dr. Erwin Miklos

Dr. Terry Evans, External Examiner

November 8, 1994

Date

I offer this piece of work to my brother Ram Chitrakar who sacrificed personal happiness and chose to take the responsibility of educating all the younger ones in the family.

ABSTRACT

This study renders problematic the dominant view that informs Nepali educators' endeavors to achieve the national goals of education, particularly through approaches such as the radio-based Basic Teacher Training (BTT) program. Critical reflections on the Nepali educational context and on approaches such as the radio-based BTT program reveal important questions that require the attention of educators. The questions asked in this study emerged out of such reflections. They emerged as the researcher struggled to understand the educational environment of the country and his own practices during his encounters with several practicing teachers. The questions investigate the meanings that practitioners make as they confront a situation of being trapped between the necessity of learning how to teach children according to the national curriculum and the complex realities of their lived world. More specifically, the study investigates the meanings that a group of people who are involved in the radio-based BTT program make out of the program in the context of their lived situation.

The study uses an interpretative approach, whereby meanings are understood in a hermeneutic tone that is informed by the insights gained from studying the works of Heidegger, Gadamer, Freire, Ricoeur, and Aoki. An insight into Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics has been particularly significant for choosing conversation as the mode of conducting the research for this study. Eight teachers and educators participated in a series of conversations that present the meanings for hermeneutic interpretation.

The conversations allowed for a process of questioning that brought to light some of the subtle intents of the dominant view of education that is used to organize programs such as BTT. In the conversations, the participants offered an insight of teaching as living along with a critique of the rational techniques emphasized in the program. It became evident in this study that the process of designing, developing, and implementing the radio-based BTT program did not fully appreciate the importance of the practitioners' experiences. While acknowledging the importance of achieving the educational goals defined at the highest level of Nepal's bureaucracy, the participants also expressed concern about the apparent lack of sensitivity among the higher authorities toward the complex educational context in which the practitioners live and work. The conversations with the participants reveal the contradictions between their lived conditions and the rationally-planned curriculum of the radio-based BTT program. In this program, the participants, especially the trainees, are merely passive participants, without the

opportunities for adequate dialogue on the packaged message delivered to them by the program.

Also, this study reveals that the concept of distance considered in the radio-based BTT program has been limited to the physical or geographical situation of the learners. However, the participants suggest that the narrowly conceived notion of distance—that led the developers of the program to assume that learners suffer from a sense of being isolated—has been promoted by higher authorities who have an ethnocentric view of development. Their view of distance ignores the cultural meaning of distance, that is they disregard the values of the place where learners live. A narrow concept of distance does not allow the developer of the program to acknowledge learners potential to learn by being who and where they are.

The consequences of a greater control of bureaucratic rationality over the structure and content of the program should be understood in a more genuine sense. The study recommends the use of more collaborative approaches and participatory action research that allows for more self-reflective, self-transforming practices to take place at all levels of the educational structure. The study concludes by suggesting that the radio-based BTT program could be more significance for rural Nepalese primary teachers if there were approaches in which the practitioners' rich contextual experiences and their feedback to the learning process were truly considered and their voices acknowledged at the higher levels of the bureaucracy.

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I wish to extend my thanks to the participants of my research without whose support this study would have never been completed. Although, the participants' names are omitted for the sake of anonymity and confidentiality, they will always be in my heart as the true teachers whose experiences have been a remarkable source of knowledge for me.

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Chapter I

PERSONAL REFLECTION AS AN APPROACH TO PRESENTING THE QUESTION OF PARTICIPATION IN THE RADIO EDUCATION PROGRAM

Introduction

Two of the most basic and striking problems that the government of Nepal is facing in the field of primary education are making it available to the general population and maintaining quality at an acceptable standard. It has been felt important by everyone concerned that for both these purposes the country needs an adequate number of qualified and trained teachers. In view of this, the government through various programs, has taken many approaches to preparing trained teachers since the time formal education became available to the general population. The Radio Education Teacher Training (RETT) project, a distance education approach that has implemented three different programs during the period 1978 to 1990, was initiated with a specific aim of providing in-service training to the bulk of untrained primary teachers scattered around the country in the remote villages.[1] Currently, the project has been institutionalized as a primary teacher training institute which provides a radio-based 150-hour Basic Teacher Training (BTT) program to primary teachers.[2]

Distance education, particularly for a country like Nepal, may be considered an innovative approach by which learning opportunities could be provided to many isolated learners. Following the fundamental ideas of distance education the RETT project was initiated in Nepal with a view to overcoming the massive problem of the dearth of qualified and trained teachers at the primary level. The problem was viewed as too big a challenge to be met through campus-based education alone.

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[1]However, this original government intent of utilizing radio for training the untrained primary teachers of the more remote districts has lately been changed. "It proved easier to get teams of four or five teacher-trainers out to the more remote regions to conduct 25-day training sessions than it did to set up multifaceted distance-teaching courses for the same areas" (Holmes, Karmacharya, & Mayo, 1993, p. 153).

[2]There are four other agencies that also provide the 150-hour BTT to teachers. The four agencies are Ministry of Education and Culture/Regional Education Directorates (MOEC/RED), Tribhuvan University/Faculty of Education (TU/FOE), Primary Education Project (PEP), and Education for Rural Development, Seti Zone Project (SETI). During the years 1987-90 a total of 13742 teachers enrolled in the BTT program. The respective agencies enrolled 5660, 2526, 1688 and 494 teachers and the RETT project enrolled 3374 teachers (Holmes, Karmacharya, & Mayo, 1993, p. 162).

The project was started in 1978 (with the launching of the first program in 1980) as a joint venture of the government of Nepal and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). More than 4 million US dollars were spent in the first phase (RETT I, 1978-1983) of the project (Butterworth, Karmacharya, & Martin, 1983; Holmes, Karmacharya, & Mayo, 1993). The second phase (RETT II, 1984-1990) cost about 2.5 million US dollars (Anzalone, & Mahtema, 1989, p. 3).

The three programs that were developed under the RETT project were: i) the Under-SLC (for those without the School Leaving Certificate, i.e., 10 years full-time schooling) Teacher Training course (1980-88); ii) the Radio Tuition course (1985-88) based on the SLC curriculum[3] (the basic purpose of this program was to help teachers with content information of the SLC curriculum so as to prepare them for the expected minimum qualification); iii) the Basic Teacher Training (BTT) course (continuing since 1988). In September 1990 the USAID concluded its involvement in the program which put an end to the major financial and technical assistance available to the program. Since then, the radio-based BTT program has been running with the provision of limited government funds. The investment made in the RETT project has indeed been very heavy for a country like Nepal. It is, therefore, a concern of many educators to reflect on the impact and outcome of such a massive investment and to learn from them for the development of future programs.

In this study an attempt has been made to come to some understanding of the meaning that a number of participants have made about their involvement in the on-going BTT program of the RETT project. There were eight participants in the study. Two of them were primary teachers who participated in the 1992-93 session of the program and were expected to listen to the radio lessons for 30 minutes at 5:30 PM Sunday through Friday and attend the resource classes conducted every second Saturday from 10:30 AM to 1 PM. The combination of radio and resource classes for this group of teachers was started in November 1992 and ended in May 1993 and the four-month period of my research in Nepal falls within those months. Two other participants were also primary teachers who went through the same program in the session of 1991-92. As well, two high-school teachers who were involved in the program as resource teachers also participated in the study. Their role was mainly confined to assisting the program participants throughout the training period by conducting the resource classes. The seventh participant of the study

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[3]Although lessons on all the key subjects of the SLC curriculum were originally planned for radio broadcast through the Radio Tuition course, because of the changes in government policies coupled with other difficulties only lessons on English were broadcast.

was the evaluation consultant who worked in the RETT project for about six years (1984-90). His responsibility was to assist and strengthen the RETT staff in conducting research and evaluating activities of the programs developed under the RETT project. Finally, with a view to including a little broader perspective in the process of meaning making, participation from one of the core staff of the RETT office was also sought.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of the study was to investigate a radio-based distance education program for teacher training and raise questions as to what extent the planned objectives of the program made sense to the individuals involved. It is, therefore, an attempt to problematize the dominant view with which the program has been implemented.

How is an educational program conceived, developed, and implemented and how do practitioners make sense of such a program? Traditionally, educators involved in the development of such a program usually try to assess people's "needs" through a baseline survey. They typically want to see a list of the needs as if they could easily be identified through a survey. In most cases, the identified needs become a very rigid guideline for carrying out the implementation of the proposed program. The program then takes a form of intervention which allows no flexibility in its predetermined set of activities. What seems lacking among the individuals involved in the implementation process is an attempt to hermeneutically understand the outcome of the intervention in relation to the context where the program is being implemented.

In more general terms the purpose of this study is to explore what it is like for educators to practice in the complex educational context and at the same time continue to be optimistic of seeing possibilities in their tasks of achieving the goals of overall national development. Through this research I want to be attentive to the voices of the individuals involved in situational practices and develop an understanding of what becomes apparent in those voices.

Research Questions

In order to find ways to improve educational and instructional practices in schools Nepal has experimented with several "innovative" educational programs.[4] Most of these

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[4]The examples of such programs are: (i) Primary Education Project (PEP) conducted by MOEC with a total cost for 1984-90 of US$16.67 millions of which US$12.78 millions (76.7%) was the loan provided by the World Bank and US$1.7 million (10.2%) was the grant assistance of the UNICEF and the rest, US$2.19 millions (13.1%) was borne by His Majesty's Government (HMG) of Nepal (MOEC, HMG, 1991); (ii) Instructional

innovations attempt to provide immediate solutions to complex educational problems. Implementation and expansion of distance education, particularly through the RETT programs, seems to be yet another approach to tackling such educational problems. I do not mean to criticize innovations in general. But what I am concerned about is that the negative consequences of implementing such projects on a "trial and error" basis is at least realized by the educators involved in the development of such innovations. The recipients usually remain silent (or perhaps, their voices are not heard) while choices are made about their educational needs.

Most often, decisions regarding what is good and what is bad for teachers (or how in-service training for teachers should be conducted, or how must teachers teach), would either come from "above" (a typical Nepalese way of expressing the sense of powerlessness) or would be recommended by studies conducted *on* teachers. I am, therefore, concerned how teacher educators who are interested in innovative approaches to educating teachers can be sensitive enough to the teachers' overall context, particularly those who are practicing under extremely difficult social and educational conditions. Keeping such a context in mind I decided to carry-out this study focusing mainly on the making (and re-making) of the meanings of distance education as they were disclosed in the text of my conversations with the participants of the study who, in one way or another, were involved in the radio-based Basic Teacher Training (BTT) program.

The following research question emerged as I reflected upon the Nepalese educational context and my personal encounters with some of the participants of the Radio Tuition program conducted under the Radio Education Teacher Training (RETT) project.

What is the meaning of the radio-delivered teacher education program for the participants (the educators as well as the learners)?

The term distance education has been defined in many ways, yet a firm consensus has not been reached. For the purpose of this research, however, my use of the term refers to the approach taken by the radio-based BTT program being conducted by the RETT project of the Ministry of Education and Culture of Nepal. The approach fulfills the characteristics of a distance education system in that: the learners and teachers are separated from each other and from the teaching institution; it is not private study; it uses one form of

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Improvement in Primary Schools (phase I & II) conducted by CERID, Tribhuvan University, with a financial support of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Ottawa, Canada (CERID, 1989a); (iii) Seti Education for Rural Development Project (SERDP) conducted by MOEC, HMG, with the US$5.3 millions financial assistance of UNDP, UNICEF, and AGFUND (Arab Gulf Fund for United Nations Development Organization) (MOEC, HMG, 1991).

technical media (radio); the requirement of two way communication is met through correspondence and occasional get-togethers between the learners and the program developers; and an industrial systems approach to planning, management, and production of "high quality" distance education materials has been met by the program (Keegan, 1986).

To be guided a little more specifically in conducting the research I have stipulated the following subsidiary research questions.

1. What relationship exists between teachers' self-perception of who they are and what the system (educational, social, and cultural) expects of them?
2. What are the impacts of distance education on teachers' perception about their own roles and on their pedagogical activities?
3. How do the participants of the radio-based BTT program situate themselves in the program?
4. What relationship exists between teachers' perceived educational needs for themselves and the BTT program?
5. What improvements do the individuals involved want to see in the radio-based BTT program?
6. What do participants say about the possibilities and difficulties in bringing about such changes?
7. In what way do participants view the presence of "openness" in the radio-based BTT program?
8. What is "distance" for participants as they become involved in a teacher training program at a distance?

In order to address these questions I became engaged in series of conversations with the participants. The questions which were used as the "conversation openers" are listed in Appendix A.

Background to the Study

Politics, Society, and Education

Over the past 40 years, Nepal's political atmosphere has had a strong influence in shaping the educational system of the country. It was not until 1951 that the process of widespread access to formal education began for the general population with the overthrowing of the autocratic regime of the Ranas who ruled the country for 104 years. That year also marked the beginning of an era for the Nepalese to be exposed to the modern values that were shaping civilizations outside Nepal. The world outside, especially the

western world, provided a model of development for Nepal. According to the royal proclamation of late King Mahendra, Nepal was to achieve a western type of development in less than 10 years compared to the 100 years that the west might have taken. In effect, the Nepalese educational system was (still is) conditioned by a common desire to achieve development similar to that of the west.

Over the past forty-three years, the Nepalese people have witnessed three major political changes. The multi-party system which was reinstalled in 1990 was also the political system for 10 years after the 1951 revolution. The period between 1961 and 1990 was known as "Panchayati Prajatantra" in which the forming of political parties was an illegal act. During this period the King remained the only uncontested supreme political leader.

The first multi-party system (1951-61) took a major step towards providing formal education to the general population. In a country where formal schooling had never been a popular way to educate children and adults, providing educational opportunities to the general populace was indeed a big challenge. The issues related to quality of education and relevance of curriculum were of little concern. As well, it was practically impossible for the government to come up with a set of educational policies that would demand education to be wholly indigenous. For the purpose of developing educational policies and curricula, the government had to rely mostly on the British system of education which was also the system in neighboring India.

Nonetheless, as the stage was set for exercising the democratic way of life the new political system had made it possible for people to be able evantually to realize their own educational needs. The system allowed every individual to develop freely his or her own political ideology. Students too were active in party politics. Unfortunately, only the negative outcome of people's affiliation to political parties became prominent in the nation's political and social context which provided a strong basis for the then King to demolish the existing political system—not even allowing it to grow reasonably to its maturity—giving birth to a new political system known as Panchayat in 1961.

The changes brought about in the educational system during the Panchayat regime were mostly influenced by the political interests of the Panchayat ideology. People were forced to accept the Panchayat rule as an incontestable political system in Nepal. Any form of criticism against it would not be tolerated by the government. In such a context, it was not possible to conceptualize adoption of a liberating pedagogy in schools.

However, the King had a benevolent role to play in improving the socioeconomic conditions of the people. It did appear that he had a sincere desire to improve their living conditions. This, as he saw, was possible only through an improved educational system.

While such was the concern of the King it was also necessary for those enjoying the political power to make sure that people were not educated using a curriculum which would encourage them to go against the Panchayat ideology. Those politicians were well aware of the strength of education in popularizing anti-Panchayat ideologies among people. Therefore, schools had to try and make sure that they served people by helping them to achieve basic economic needs while at the same time influencing them to remain submissive to the oppressive regime. In other words, as has been condemned by Anyon (1988), the purpose of education and schooling was to legitimize social injustice and help maintain the status quo. Such a concern made the educational planners and curriculum developers very careful in selecting the content and methodologies to educate the people in general, and the training of teachers in particular.

Unfortunately, the Nepalese people had somehow to live through this sort of political and educational environment for more than thirty years. But, the persistent domination of Panchayat hard-liners could not last forever. They could no longer resist the popular pro-democracy movement of 1990 and relegated their political power to the people. The multi-party system was re-installed. The King no longer sustained his supreme political power but has since remained as the figure-head or the constitutional monarch of the nation.

One of the major tasks that the democratically elected new government of Nepal needed to accomplish was to make significant changes in the existing educational policies and curricula. The philosophy of the Panchayat political system embedded in the educational system, especially in the school level curricula, needed urgent cleansing. Besides many educators and practicing teachers across the country perceived that

> the existing education system is not practical and people-oriented [and] . . . is unable to inculcate a full sense of multi-party democratic values in the younger generation. Because of wrong education policies, the schools and campuses are unable to produce qualified manpower to meet the developmental needs of the country. On the other hand, quality education became more and more expensive, and the general masses are unable to share the burden of their children's educational expenses. Universalization of primary education is still too far away to be achieved by the turn of the century. (MOEC, HMG, 1991, p. 433).

Keeping the changing social and political environment in view the new government took immediate steps towards making the required changes in the existing educational plan and policies. A Basic and Primary Education Master Plan Team consisting of senior educators, administrators, and international consultants was formed within months after the popular movement of 1990. The primary purpose of the team was to come up with a comprehensive set of policy options for planning the programs of basic and primary

education in Nepal for the years between 1991 and 2001. With the submission of the report by the team the government is now in a process of gradually implementing the plan.

However, the present government even with such a "comprehensive" plan, or by whatever other means, cannot be expected to find easy solutions to the educational problems which remained severe for the past 40 years. Restoration of democracy does not automatically bring improvements in an educational system. As Schubert (1986) convincingly argues "liberty and emancipation is not merely a label associated with the political rhetoric" (p. 179). Unfortunately, the opposite is what many Nepalese people seem to believe and as such they often tend to expect too much from the new political system. The government, obliged to acknowledge people's aspiration, is forced to take actions (often superficial) that would show immediate results in terms of economic or developmental returns. Because of the superficial nature of such actions, sustaining development has become a burning problem. This led politicians and development workers to appreciate emerging concepts of, for example, "austerity measures," "participatory action research," and "sustainable development." Unfortunately, these concepts provide them with canons of development, rather than ways to develop understanding of the overall social context in relation to those concepts.

Even with the changed political system, one has many reasons to be skeptical that education in the near future will be more egalitarian and based on learners' needs. The political change actually did not bring about substantial changes in the developmental process which was typical during the Panchayat regime. The naive approach to making crucial educational decisions by politicians, with the help of so called experts, still remains dominant. The experts seem to be preoccupied by the notion of instrumentalism which provides them with a strong philosophical ground for their perceptions of development. The tradition of underestimating the role that individuals involved in situational practices at grass-roots level could play in bringing about positive educational changes has been preserved by those taking the responsibilities of nation building.

The view that the vested interests of a handful of elites control the educational, social, and economic development of the majority of people seemed to be dominant in the Nepalese educational community during both Panchayat and multi-party regimes. To provide a solution to this problem many educators take the stance that educational development can be achieved only through meeting the basic needs of people, and that the problem of dominance of minority elites over socially underprivileged population can be solved only through a non-radical movement that is negotiated within the existing system. But again, the "experts'" claim that in finding means for educational development they have

a role to play which is superior to those more directly involved, such as teachers and parents.

Furthermore, most of the Nepalese educators and policy makers perceive that the teachers' major role is to transmit knowledge to pupils according to a prescribed curriculum in the tradition of academic rationalists (Eisner, 1985; Eisner & Vallance, 1974). Coombs (1985) supports this view and points out that in developing countries the main difficulty of this task (of knowledge transmission) is related to factors such as teachers' personal qualities and students' cognitive as well as physical readiness to learn. His perception of the complex problems faced by the developing countries in the field of educational development is as simplistic as are his solutions to them. He identified teachers' competency, personality, and dedication as some of the major variables responsible for students' achievement and quality of education. For him, such qualities can be enhanced through comprehensive teacher education programs and innovations. There is an appealing tone of certainty guaranteeing positive results in this type of claim. This view of academic rationalists is dominant in the Nepalese educational context, but unfortunately teachers' lived and historical contexts are not considered. Although this view purports to be scientific and rational, it has not given due regard to the importance of an in-depth understanding of the more subtle and fundamental issues pertaining to how teachers in Nepal come into being.

The Nepalese educational system will continue to face severe problems if education is viewed only from the point of view of scientific and rational thinkers—usually that of the so called experts of education. Primary education is the basic foundation of the whole structure of learning. But most of the approaches and innovations intended to bring about positive changes at the primary level are heavily conditioned by a handful of experts. The complexity of the problems are not acknowledged in such approaches. Without allowing practitioners to have a greater role in the development and planning of educational programs, this foundation of primary education will not be as strong as it ought to be. Such a role is prevented by the closed approach the authorities have taken so far. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that Nepalese educational problems are not as simple as the "experts" might think. It is too naive to claim that there is any one method or approach that can be a panacea.

Primary Education and Teachers' Status

In 1951 there were only 321 primary schools in the entire Kingdom. This number increased dramatically to 15,893 by 1989 (MOEC, HMG, 1991, p. 126). The increase in primary schools does indeed look very encouraging. Unfortunately, Nepal's available

physical and human resources were not adequate to operate such an extensively expanded school system. As a result, schools functioned with substandard facilities and Nepal's efforts to combat a poor quality of education were never adequate. Whether the curriculum itself proved to be relevant or not was entirely a different matter. The most apparent and supposedly serious problem that always impinged upon Nepalese schools was (and still is) that of quality of teachers. Beeby's (1966) claim that the quality of education depends more than any thing else upon the quality of teachers seemed apparent in the Nepalese educational community. As such, the problem of a poor quality of education was attributed to the desperate lack of properly educated teachers in Nepalese schools.

Over the past four decades, especially after the implementation of the NESP (National Education System Plan) in 1971, many politicians, educators, planners, and administrators in Nepal, concerned over the need for improving the quality of education, have realized that the lack of competent primary teachers has been a persistent problem. While the NESP acknowledged and attempted to overcome this problem, its approach and the curriculum developed for teacher education were felt to be too unrealistic, especially in acknowledging the lived conditions of practicing and prospective teachers, students, and parents.

In the years which followed the implementation of NESP, the Ministry of Education continued to pursue the quantitative expansion of primary education. Furthermore, the government was committed, and is still trying, to achieve the goal of universal primary education (UPE) by the end of the century. In order to meet the demands of UPE (at least, from the point of view of human resources) by the end of this century, the country will need more than eighty thousand trained teachers compared to the current figure of only about sixteen thousand (Shrestha, 1988b). Because of this dearth of teachers, it appears that the nation will have to continue primary schooling without adequately trained and qualified teachers for many years. Looking at the present modalities of teacher education, many educators are not optimistic that the goals of both universal, as well as quality, primary education will be achieved. These realities lead one to conclude that even by the year 2000 a typical Nepalese primary school will not have a full staff of trained, qualified and thoughtful pedagogues.

Many problems that are being encountered by educators in their efforts towards educational development seem to arise from their lack of understanding of the conditions under which teachers have to work and the relationships between teachers' lived conditions and the developed programs[5] (e.g., Primary Education project, Science Education project,

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[5]Details of such programs are given in IEES (1988).

Seti Education for Rural Development project, etc.). As well, in order to fulfill the demand of trained teachers, several in-service teacher education programs[6] in the field of teacher education have been developed over the past two decades (e.g., Radio Education Teacher Training Project, Basic Teacher Training program, On the Spot Teacher Training project, and several teachers' workshops typically of 10 to 15 days duration on specific teaching skills such as production of instructional materials, classroom management, subject matter teaching, etc.). Most often these efforts were confined to the ideas which were (and still are) centrally conceived and which did not give much regard to what the teachers had to say about their needs. The role-expectations of teachers explicit in many newly developed educational programs were far too demanding. The current radio-based BTT program is one such desperate effort.

What is the reward for teachers who accept the challenges that are expected of them in the educational programs? More than two decades ago in his recommendations for Nepal's educational planning, Burton (1966) indicated that unless something is done to make the teaching profession more attractive "the good effect of giving assistance to teacher training can be only limited" (p. 6). He emphasized an investigation into the financial side of education, particularly "about the salaries paid to teachers . . . and how they supplement their inadequate salaries" (p. 6). However, looking at the present economic conditions of the country, the financial prospect of the teaching profession is likely to stay gloomy for many more years to come. Is there hope that the teaching/learning environment of the majority of schools in the country can be improved even though teachers are being paid what appear to be inadequate salaries? Only teachers have an answer to this question, but unfortunately they have neither been heard nor understood by those of us who took the responsibility of educating them.

Over the past three decades several in-service teacher education projects have been implemented in Nepal with the financial support of international agencies, or by acquiring loans from the World Bank. In order to ensure full participation of teachers, most of these projects allocated funds for providing them training allowances. In other words, the incentive for teachers to participate in such programs depended upon extrinsic sources rather than the perceived importance of the program. From my own experience of working in such projects I found that the teaching "skills" *taught* (not learned) in such projects were usually not practical in "normal" classroom situations. I noticed two basic reasons for this. One, learning new teaching skills meant more work for teachers than what they traditionally had been doing. Two, once a particular project was over then teachers would return to

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[6]Details of such programs are given in IEES (1988).

working under the same environment with no more allowance or increased salary. The extra time and effort that a program seeks from teachers in their teaching practices may demand that they stay away from other income earning activities (which are required of them to supplement their inadequate salaries). For these reasons, it cannot be anticipated that sheer adoption of the techniques used in a typical teacher education project will bring about any significant improvement in the prevailing teaching/learning conditions. Therefore, given that the financial problem of teachers is likely to persist, it is necessary to explore other more sensitive and humane approaches to improving this condition. In such a context, it is essential that those taking the responsibility of developing innovative programs for teacher education acknowledge the extent to which such financial conditions of teachers become pivotal for a meaningful implementation of newly developed programs.

Development of Teacher Education Programs in Nepal

The independence of India from British colonization in 1947 was a threatening event for the then autocratic rulers, the Ranas, of Nepal. They were cognizant that expansion of schooling was one of the key factors that brought Indian people together against the colonial power. The Ranas were, therefore, concerned that the provision of educational opportunities to the general population would overthrow their regime. Yet, in spite of the restrictions they had imposed, education was becoming popular. In those days, most of the Nepalese political activists did their schooling in India. Many became involved in self-studies. Those who were educated started teaching other interested people. One significant point about the education at that time was that it was possible to talk and study about emancipatory and revolutionary ideas. Education, in other words, was open.

Although this type of education was mostly confined to a small number of urban elites, it served as a tool in organizing a collective force which was strong enough to shake the thinking of totalitarian rulers. The Ranas felt that an education informally acquired could be detrimental in sustaining their political interests. They began to think along the lines of opening up public schools which would not only fulfill one of the overdue demands of people, but could also implement a curriculum that would serve the political purpose of the ruling class. Consequently, following independence in India, an education system known as Basic Education was introduced in Nepal. The main purpose of this system of education was to educate people in the fields of basic skills related to manual work and crafts. This step gave rise to an additional requirement on the part of the government to consider a need to train teachers. So, along with the introduction of Basic education the first National Teacher Training Centre was established in the same year (1947). The first seeds of teacher education were planted.

In 1951, not too long after Basic Education was implemented, the Ranas were overthrown and the stage was set to establish a democratic society in the country. With this change of political system there developed new aspirations for education. The philosophy of Basic Education was no longer relevant for the new democratic society and, therefore, was replaced by an expansion of primary education. As a result, a movement toward opening an extensive number of National Primary Schools took place. Within a relatively short period of time an immense growth in primary schools was witnessed thereby giving birth to the problem of a dearth of trained teachers to teach in the growing number of primary schools.

In 1956, in response to this problem, the Ministry of Education opened several Normal Schools in different parts of the Kingdom and initiated primary teacher education programs. There was also a need to prepare secondary school teachers as more and more children began to complete primary schooling. So, in the same year, the College of Education was established in Kathmandu as an institute for educating secondary school teachers. The financial and technical support required were provided by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Although it may sometimes be difficult to find a relationship between the educational needs of people and the establishment of these institutes, their presence at the time has significantly contributed to Nepal's effort for educational development. Before the implementation of the National Education System Plan (NESP) in 1971, both the Normal Schools and the College of Education had been producing a large, although insufficient, number of primary and secondary teachers.

As Shrestha (1988a) has pointed out, the Normal Schools not only provided teachers for the rural primary schools but also brought an educational awareness throughout the country. Similarly, graduates of the College of Education enhanced the professional activities of that institute. During the 15 year life period of those institutes, opportunities were provided to the faculty members of the College of Education and the Primary School Teachers Training Centres to go to foreign countries, particularly to the United States (USA is still supporting Nepal financially for its educational development endeavors) for professional training and higher education. The individuals trained at foreign universities have taken up the leadership roles in most of the educational development endeavors of the country, particularly in teacher education programs.

However, despite an increase in the number of highly trained personnel in the field of education the efforts made toward meeting the teacher education demand remained inadequate. An increasing number of primary schools continued to hire secondary school (SLC) graduates to fulfill the teacher needs. As well, there were many schools, especially in remote areas, where individuals who did not even have a grade eight level of education

were given the responsibilities of teaching primary classes. Obviously, a good quality of education was not to be expected and for this reason the government gave serious thought to finding ways to tackle this issue.

The implementation of the National Educational System Plan (NESP) in 1971 was a major step taken to bring an overall structural change to the field of education in the country. The responsibilities of teacher education had been given to the Institute of Education—a newly established institute affiliated with Tribhuvan University (the only university of the Kingdom)—which led to the closure of the College of Education and the Normal School schemes. The need to improve the quality of education led the NESP to adopt a policy that made training[7] mandatory for obtaining tenure in teaching. But this policy did not apply to those teachers who were already teaching. However, as an encouragement trained teachers were given higher salaries. As a result, training became popular among both practicing and prospective teachers and forced the Institute of Education to diversify and expand the scope of its teacher education program. The number of campuses, as well as teacher educators, had to be increased. Some campuses needed upgrading to meet the pressure of enrollment. But the existing physical facilities and professional expertise of the Institute of Education were not adequate to *appropriately* meet the demands of upgrading or of increasing the number of campuses. Such an inadequate infrastructure of the campuses of the Institute of Education made their operation very difficult and ineffective. Moreover, as has been indicated by Shrestha (1988a), the curricula of the teacher education program of those campuses were highly academic as opposed to being more practical or directly related to the local conditions. "The academic nature of the IOE [Institute of Education] programs, while helping teachers upgrade for higher positions, failed to have any immediate impact on school teaching" (Shrestha, 1988a, p. 18). With its limited resources, however, the Institute of Education attempted to maintain "a balance between the expansion and consolidation of its activities" (Shrestha, 1988a, p. 18).

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[7]Any individual willing to enter the teaching profession in a primary school was expected to have an academic qualification of minimum of one year (two semesters) successful completion of courses in the Proficiency Certificate level (four-semester degree program equivalent to Intermediate in Education) of the Institute of Education, Tribhuvan University. While the formal teacher education program continued for the prospective teachers in the regular academic sessions of the Institute of Education, other in-service teacher "training" programs, usually short-term (6 to 10 months), were being conducted either by the Training Section of MOEC or by Tribhuvan University. The idea was to provide teachers with generic and basic teaching skills and knowledge of classroom management. Once teachers successfully complete such training programs they obtain the status of trained teachers and are entitled to higher salaries.

Unfortunately in 1980, while the Institute was just beginning to give new impetus to teacher education programs, the government announced the seventh amendment to the Education Act with a view to address the problems of establishing equal educational opportunities for all citizens. One of the resolutions of that amendment was that teacher education would no longer be mandatory for tenure in teaching. This policy seriously affected the programs of the Institute of Education. Enrollment began to drop dramatically. In a single year after the implementation of this act student numbers dropped from 6178 to 2826 (Shrestha, 1988a, p. 18). The existence of the Institute of Education became more insignificant. However, it continued to provide degrees in education and in focus became more academic and less concerned with the practical needs of the school system. In 1983 the academic function of the Institute was further reaffirmed by the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Higher Education. Since then the operation of the Institute of Education has been like an indefinitely flying bird that has lost a sense of the ground or the real world.

In order to consolidate the training needs of primary teachers, however, the Ministry of Education and Culture initiated several innovative projects and short duration training programs. Since these training programs were specifically intended for in-service teachers, the importance of pre-service teacher education remained unnoticed and the trend of hiring teachers in the schools without formal training remained common. Even today, almost every school, especially in the rural areas, has on staff a significant number of teachers who have only an in-service preparation program. These teachers get into training programs only after they are already in the profession. In other words, they "learn" to become teachers at the cost of children's opportunities to learn from thoughtful pedagogues.

The consequence is seriously damaging. In my experience, children in many rural primary schools did not make any sense of schooling. How could it possibly happen when teachers themselves were not clear of what their roles and responsibilities were as the pedagogues in a modern school system? Can children grow in such a confusing educational atmosphere? Almost all rural primary teachers were once such children. But very few would ever have an opportunity to go through a teacher education program. As a result the chaotic educational atmosphere has been re-produced one generation after another. What sort of pedagogical relationships exist between children and teachers in such an educational environment? What do we expect these children to become in the future as a result of their participation in such an educational system? In what way do the current teacher education programs address these issues? These are some of the crucial questions guiding my thoughts as I currently reflect upon my past educational activities.

Perceptions about the Programs Developed under the RETT Project

The programs developed under the RETT project were felt to be "the most cost-effective and . . . feasible means of reaching the bulk of . . . in-service teachers [who did not have any opportunity to go through a formal teacher education program] serving in different parts of the country" (Shakya, Pradhan, and Bista, 1988, p. 57). It was contemplated that the medium of radio would prove to be effective for "training untrained rural primary school teachers . . . through well crafted, radio lessons reinforced with self-instructional materials and periodic workshops" (Adhikari, Khatri, and Devkota, 1988, p. 1). It has now been more than a decade since radio lessons were broadcast under the RETT project and most recently as the regular government program for teacher training. Yet, "Nepal's experience with using radio to train teachers is still inconclusive" (Anzalone & Mathema, 1989, p. iv).

Over the years (1978-90) the RETT project made numerous efforts of incorporating major changes in its curriculum with a view to supporting the gradual transition of the program into an "institution" of distance education for teacher training. But none of the evaluation studies strongly recommended that the project had a potential to be institutionalized. As a matter of fact, all the efforts and resources put into it for the purpose of teacher education are likely to be for naught as the capacity of radio broadcast *alone* to develop the "pedagogical skills" for primary teachers is viewed with skepticism. Commenting on the radio-based BTT program, the report of the Master Plan Team on Nepal's basic and primary education mentions that "the self-study materials used in the RETT are heavily content-loaded. The acquisition of pedagogical skills by primary teachers as intended in the 150-hour packages will be difficult to be realized by radio broadcast alone" (MOEC, HMG, 1991, p. 274).

However, it is not only the radio-based BTT program that should be viewed as counter-productive in terms of helping teachers to develop pedagogical skills but also none of the other teacher education programs, considered *alone*, has achieved this objective. If we were concerned with the mere delivery of knowledge of "pedagogical skills"—without actually acknowledging the complexity of understanding such skills—then the task should not be of any problem to the radio-based BTT program. The way the term "pedagogy" is used in the curriculum of 150-hour BTT package and other teacher education programs implies that there is a universal theory of pedagogy which could be delivered to teachers in a training program and make them skilled pedagogues. But, it would be naive to assume that a universal theory of pedagogy would make sense to every individual teacher.

Max van Manen (1991) explores the concept of pedagogy in his book *The tact of teaching: The meaning of pedagogical thoughtfulness*. Yet, he does not suggest one

concrete theory of pedagogy. He rather makes it clear that pedagogical thoughtfulness develops from teachers' *own* reflective practice that gives "the welfare of our children higher priority, [takes] young people seriously, and always [considers] educational concerns first from the child's point of view" (p. xi).

The point I am trying to make here is that the issue related to pedagogical skills is not adequate enough to disregard the potential of innovations like the RETT project. The crucial question is what activities can RETT best do; what can be incorporated in its BTT program for allowing reflective practice among the participants? This issue does not seem to be of any concern in making important decisions about the future of radio education's BTT program. As well, none of the research conducted by the RETT project considered this aspect. The inquiry process of the research had largely aimed at understanding objective meanings and overlooked the lived meanings of the program for teachers. The final evaluation report on the first program of the RETT project confirms such a tendency. Pointing out the essential characteristics of someone responsible to organize a face-to-face teaching or a workshop session as a supplementary activity of the program the report mentions:

> To be effective, workshop leaders should be able to demonstrate the different techniques presented in the program, critique teachers in practice sessions, and lead discussions to clarify information presented in the radio broadcasts and SIMs [self-instructional materials]. (Butterworth, Karmacharya, & Martin 1983, p. 18)

The emphasis given to the qualities of a workshop leader reflects the concerns of evaluators for the objective accomplishment of program goals. They do not indicate, however, the basic human qualities—such as humility, sense of humor, sensitivity, etc.—as being important for the leader to be "effective." In fact with the help of such qualities one may establish relationships with others and develop an understanding of their lived conditions. While the objective approach may ensure the authority of knowledge for the workshop leader, his or her humane qualities would allow him or her to be inquisitive and learn from the learners themselves. With mutual trust they can collectively come to an understanding of both lived and objective meanings of the program which in turn may allow them to see various possibilities in their practices.

Distance Education for Teacher Training

As Perraton (1993) pointed out, "in the last third of the [twentieth] century, near impossible burdens have been placed on the teaching service of developing countries" (p. 1). While in economically rich countries teachers, who would at least have finished 12 years of schooling, must go through several years of teacher education program prior to

starting the job, in poor countries large number of teachers are not only untrained but also are "under-qualified." Even by allowing such individuals to teach, many poor nations are facing a problem of shortage of teachers. The problem of supply as well as that of lack of adequate qualification and training of teachers contribute to a poor quality of education in most of the developing countries.

"These problems of quality and quantity have not been solved by the development and expansion of conventional methods of teacher training" (Perraton 1993, p. 2). So ministries of education in developing countries encourage innovative approaches to educating prospective and practicing teachers. As Perraton (1993) mentioned distance-education programs have become one of such approaches. Three basic reasons why a government in a developing country adopts distance education methods for educating teachers are:

> they make it possible to reach students who cannot get to a college; they lend themselves to part-time education so that students are not taken out of the work force in order to study; they appear to allow economies, in part by avoiding the need for new buildings including housing for students. (Perraton 1993, p. 3)

The eleven case studies of distance education for teacher training presented in the book edited by Perraton (1993) explained the diversity of methods, media selection, audience, and costs of the programs. While some teacher training programs are being conducted on a regular basis by well established open universities like Australia's Deakin University, U.K.'s Open University, and Nigeria's Open Studies Institute of University of Lagos, some other programs are trying to grow to their fuller strength and take the form of formal institutions of distance education like in the case of Nepal's RETT, and Brazil's LOGOS II programs.

No matter how diverse the approaches are that the different distance education programs for teacher training have taken, they all seem to have one common aspect; that of some kind of face-to-face contact between the distance learners and their teachers. For example in Tanzania, a pre-service initial training program through a distance education method, that used radio and cassette programs, had also integrated face-to-face tuition and residential seminars (Chale 1993). Similarly, the face-to-face element in Nepal's radio program for Basic Teacher Training was ensured through the incorporation of "a half-day teachers' orientation, a 30-hour face-to-face practical session, and a system of monthly 'resource teacher sessions' for participants" (Holmes, Karmacharya, & Mayo, 1993, p. 152). Keeping in view the necessity to include an element of such a face-to-face teaching in various forms of distance education, Perraton (1993) called the very term "distance education" as a misnomer. But why was it necessary for the distance education programs

described in his book to have the face-to-face component integrated? And what made him sure that the distance education programs which included an element of face-to-face teaching were likely to be most effective?

The term "distance education" might have been a misnomer for Perraton (1993) but as McNamara (1990) asserted the possibility for it to be "open"—to the extent that learners find it accommodating rather than restricting—transcends it from a mere substitute of the conventional campus-based face-to-face teaching to a more humane means of learning. As could be understood in all of the case studies documented in Perraton's (1993) book the fundamental purpose of adopting distance education approaches to teacher training was rooted to a more humble intent of finding ways of helping those learners for whom the doors of conventional campus-based teacher education program were closed. Inclusion of an element of face-to-face teaching in the distance education programs might have been one of the considerations made in the programs towards making them more accommodating of learners' needs.

The Radio-Based BTT Program of the RETT Project

In their article on the RETT project of Nepal, Holmes, Karmacharya, and Mayo (1993) confirmed that radio for teacher training purposes had evolved as an innovative project in 1978 when the MOEC was looking for alternative approaches to providing training to the bulk of untrained primary teachers while the local USAID mission was showing an interest in implementing an educational radio project in the country. The MOEC with its policy of mandatory training for teachers to obtain permanent status (tenure) was facing a severe lack of trained teachers. In 1976 only 39% of the total of primary teachers were trained (Holmes, Karmacharya, & Mayo, 1993, p. 138). Therefore, there was a huge backlog of teachers waiting to be trained and become eligible for tenure. Since it was impossible for the traditional face-to-face method alone to accomplish this task various alternative methods were considered. As Holmes, Karmacharya, and Mayo (1993) pointed out:

> Given Nepal's rugged, mountainous terrain and the absence of a reliable transportation system, making delivery of printed materials highly problematic, it was proposed that radio carry a larger share of the instructional burden than was typically the case in other distance-education systems. (p. 141)

Clearly, the purpose of implementing radio-based distance education for teacher training was more of a mechanistic approach to training teachers—stemming from the government's interest in fulfilling the target set out in the NESP. The extent of flexibility is therefore limited only to the convenience that participants would not have to leave their

work place for the purpose of receiving training. The schedule and pace are fixed for all those who show an interest to take part in any particular session of the program. Participants are expected to set aside the evening of all weekdays for listening to the broadcast lessons and almost one full day (which was increased to two days in 1992-93 session) a month on Saturdays for nine months for the purpose of attending the resource classes. All these requirements indicate that the program is far from being flexible.

However, it may be flexible in the sense that participants are not under any pressure to listen to the radio programs and they could be absent for as many as three resource classes and still be eligible to take the final examinations. Obviously, such a type of openness has had a negative impact rather than a positive one on teachers' learning. In their study of survey data and letters sent by the participants of the radio-based BTT program, Holmes, Karmacharya, and Mayo (1993) found out that teachers rely more on the printed material provided by RETT project than the radio broadcasts. They also noted that the pass rate of the participants was markedly low compared to those who went through other face-to-face BTT programs.[8] Clearly, the radio-based program has not been appropriately responsive to teachers' concerns. As a result, their participation lacked an adequate degree of interest and enthusiasm.

No effort has been made to develop an understanding as to why such a practice prevails among the participants. The studies conducted on the RETT programs are mostly empirical and confined to statistical analyses without adequate illuminative and qualitative information. No attempt has been made to develop an insight into the extent to which the programs are inappropriate or what practical improvements could be made to make it more appealing for the majority of Nepalese primary teachers. This type of inquiry would require the researchers to be open and sensitive towards the practitioners. A mere objective approach to conducting research may not be helpful.

Concept of "Distance"

The term "distance" is mostly understood as geographical or physical distance by many educators when they deal with the concept of "distance" in distance education. In view of this concept, and also because of the harsh geographical conditions of the country, distance education is considered as one of the most appropriate methods of education in Nepal. This view is usually the primary argument put forth in any proposed project

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[8] According to the figures during the three year periods between 1987 and 1990, 57% of the participants enrolled in the radio-based program compared to 94.8% of those enrolled in other face-to-face programs passed the final examination and become certified (see Holmes, Karmacharya, & Mayo, 1993, p. 161).

document prepared for funding. But the fact that this is rather a narrow view to understand the meaning of the term "distance" is discussed by various authors (e.g., Evans, 1989; Rumble, 1989; Moore, 1983).

Evans (1989) examines the notion of distance and place using theories of distance from the social sciences. Understanding of concept of *place* is crucial in order for us to define *distance*. According to Evans (1989), in school as well as at home children learn about their localities as *their places*, not only as they are but also in relation to other places, especially the central places in the society and globally.

> Usually it is in these central places that state provides specialist and tertiary education, alongside all the other services and facilities provided by state and non-state agencies. . . . At this point *distance* needs to be introduced as a concept which bears upon not only our concept of *place* but also upon the relations between them. These relations are not just measures of distance or types of terrain, but also they include the nature of transport and communications, the political and economic links and, perhaps most deeply significant, those historical and cultural conditions which form the places in question. (Evans, 1989, p. 172)

Distance, therefore, is a complex entity which needs an understanding deeper than how it is understood in most of the distance education theories and practices. In Nepal's case, although the most prominent distance might appear to be physical distance, with the opening of educational resources centres at various places including remote villages this aspect of distance is reduced to some extent. However, the distance created among people due to the differences in historical and cultural conditions cannot be reduced merely with the fulfillment of physical needs. It is the distance of relationships. The extent to which an educational program considers the importance of close relationships between the program developers and practitioners becomes a crucial issue.

In Nepal launching of an in-service teacher "training" program through radio contributed to reducing the geographical distance between central educators and local teachers. "Radio offered the best and cheapest means of reaching most of the country's school teachers. It would also enable trainees to be linked directly with the best teacher educator in the country" (Holmes, Karmacharya, & Mayo, 1993, p. 141). The physical distance between the teacher and the trainee might have been taken care of by the use of the medium. The knowledge of teaching that is packaged in the form of broadcast lessons can be heard by a teacher right in his or her home. Additionally the teacher can also refer to the printed material made available to him or her. For these radio-print media to be meaningful for the teacher they have to be developed and re-developed with a continuous attempt by the developer to understand the world in which the learner lives. For this kind of practice to take place there has to be a relationship established between the learner and the developer.

Participants' experiences of learning through the radio-based BTT program are briefly described by Holmes, Karmacharya, and Mayo (1993). They have found that although the package of knowledge of teaching was delivered at teachers' doorsteps in the form of radio lessons—thereby eliminating the problem of geographical distance that they would have faced if they were to learn the same knowledge through a campus-based program—the teachers did not show much interest in listening to the radio programs. Except for speculating and pointing out some of the possible causes of the teacher's lack of interest, the authors have not said anything about what the teacher's responses would have been if the program developers had maintained a "closer" (as opposed to distant) relationship with the participants. Why the teachers were not very keen to listen to the radio program is not a major issue that the authors investigated in their study. However, what can be gathered from the article is that the radio-based BTT program has been viewed by its participants as being incompatible for them in many ways. The program with "well crafted" radio lessons has been carried through the rugged mountains to the doorsteps of teachers yet they find it difficult to identify with. It will therefore be interesting to find out from the teachers what it means for them to participate in such a program.

It is indeed unfortunate that the Master Plan Team found the radio-based BTT program incapable of imparting "pedagogical skills" to teachers and, based on this finding, made a decision that "the RETT project will [only] be utilized to mount a teacher training enrichment program." (MOEC, HMG, 1991, p. 278). But how can one be assured that even this new and seemingly less challenging task envisioned for the future RETT project will be effective? Why is the task of understanding meaning not an important matter? If we were to consider reflective practice as a means to improving our teaching/learning situation and adopt it in the current RETT program, then perhaps a fundamental responsibility should be to understand the relationships between teachers' being and the program itself. If the radio broadcasts alone are not effective in imparting "pedagogical skills" to teachers (MOEC, HMG, 1991, p. 274) then the decision as to what other aspects need to be considered should be made, neither arbitrarily nor only on the basis of the findings of superficial evaluative studies, but also by being critically reflective of what it means to teachers to participate in the radio-based teacher training program. In my personal experience I have found that this type of practice is lacking among the developers of the distance education program for teachers.

An Autobiographical Context

This inquiry into the meaning of the radio-based BTT program has a firm connection with my personal experience. It evolved as I reflected upon my feelings about

the relationships I, as a program evaluator, had with several Nepalese teachers participating in the Radio Tuition course of the RETT project in 1985/86. The responsibility of the evaluation of the Radio Tuition course provided me with opportunities to visit the teachers' homes to conduct interviews and to observe them listening to the radio lessons.

In 1980, I started my career as an Assistant Research Officer at CERID (Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development). Although, I had limited prior experience in pedagogical activities (only one-year of teaching mathematics and science in grades 4, 7, and 8 in one of the rural schools outside Kathmandu valley), over the past 10 years at CERID I have had many interesting experiences working in different educational projects. For me the work experiences at CERID have been crucial in allowing me to come to some understanding of the problem area that I chose to pursue in this study.

During my ten-year tenure at CERID I lived two professional lives; first, assuming responsibilities related to data analysis, report writing, and preparation of prototype instructional materials for teachers, students and parents: second, assuming the responsibilities of field work in rural areas and coming into contact with practicing teachers and others at the grass-roots level. These experiences provided me with opportunities to make some sense of various perspectives and paradigms of curriculum inquiry that I have studied over the past several years in the University of Alberta.

In view of my brief description of the working environment at CERID it can be argued that the institute operates mostly within a philosophical paradigm of positivism. This is characterized by: its approach to educational development and innovations through a process of producing and prepackaging educational materials for people; its heavy adherence to quantitative research methodology with emphasis on predictability and generalizability of results; its tendency to maintain a hierarchy between experts and novices (the former being more "knowledgeable" than the latter), and so on. By pointing out the positivist stance of CERID's research endeavors I am not trying to present myself as anything different. The characteristics mentioned above were also the guiding principles for me in assuming my responsibilities. However, I had always sensed some sort of gap between CERID's "innovative" programs and the lived world of the people I worked with, a gap which I did not quite see as important a factor to be considered in the innovations as it appears to me now.

In my later years at CERID I was extensively involved in projects which mainly focused on preparing teachers for improved instructional practices at the primary schools. The conventional method of teacher education (both pre and in-service) does not seem to be effective nor did any innovative approaches seem to work. I strongly feel that we have not given enough attention to teachers' lived conditions and their feelings in developing teacher

education programs. Keeping this context in view I became interested in exploring the possibility of a re-conceptualized form of teacher education program that gives an importance to the necessity of understanding learners' and teachers' lived conditions and how the program fits into their lives. By focusing on this aspect I have not down-played the importance of traditional approaches but have rather tried to unfold some additional dimensions which I hope may provide us with a little more critical understanding of our educational problems.

I have looked at this concept in the field of distance teacher education. In so doing, I particularly have studied general theories and practices of distance education in relation to the problems of teacher education. How has the field of distance education developed? In what way has distance teaching contributed to the effort of fulfilling the need for qualified and trained teachers in Nepalese schools? How is distance education viewed and adopted in the Nepalese context? How does the typical Nepalese view of distance education compare with other experiences? What are the strengths and weaknesses of distance education? These were some of the issues which I dealt with more specifically in the earlier section of this chapter.

Some Issues Related to the Scope of the Study

This study is conducted with the help of selected participants involved in the radio-based BTT program. It has not been ensured statistically that the participants represent the general population involved in the program. It is, in fact, not perceived as important to emphasize such a statistical insurance of representativeness as the study was designed to inquire into the participants' reflections on their practices in the lived situations specific to them. However, it does not necessarily mean that the research is not in some sense generalizable. The process of interpretations and coming up with meanings is an attempt to be sensitive towards the lived world of practitioners. This process of doing research is shared by anyone concerned in making education more meaningful and innovations more related to practitioners' and children's educational needs. The study carries with it a message as to how an understanding of, and an ethical sensibility towards, situational practices of practitioners opens up a whole new set of possibilities to improving our educational practices.

Readers may raise questions regarding the extent of the validity of the study as the data were gathered in Nepal while major portions of interpretations and analyses had been carried out in Canada. However, in order to maximize validity, repeated conversations with each participant were held after the transcripts of each conversation were read, re-read and summarized for further discussions and clarifications. Although, the final analyses and

interpretations lack further opinions of the participants, effort was made to triangulate the process with the help of field notes, photographs and videos of schools and household environments of some of the participants, my personal journal, and notes taken at the Resource Classes and actual classrooms where the participants were teaching. Furthermore, an additional step was taken towards ensuring validity to the extent possible by asking a colleague familiar with the Nepalese educational context to act as a critical reader and produce comments on my interpretations of the conversation texts.

Using conversations as the main basis of the research raises the question as to whether or not a convincing degree of mutual trust is established between the researcher and participants for true conversations to take place. It would be natural for a reader to bring to mind this question of mutual trust. The most I could do was to be conscious of this issue at all times during my contacts with the participants. I was concerned not to jeopardize the relationships I established with them by being as ethical, humble, and as sensitive a listener and speaker as possible. It was also my view that mutual trust might become stronger if the participants were comfortable with me and were confident that we were going to have a long-term relationship. I was, however, careful to make sure that the participants were aware of the fact that their association with me was not going to be of any material benefit to them. It was my ethical obligation to make clear that I was not there to directly help them improve their physical or educational conditions. Rather, I was the principal benefactor who would benefit by their cooperation, although hopefully the results might help improve teacher education generally and them individually by reflecting on their educational lives. Making this position of mine clear seemed to have a positive effect in establishing the intended mutual trust. I have been receiving personal letters from most of the participants in which they have expressed a deep sense of concern and wondered to what extent their participation made sense for my study. Ethically obliged as I am, I am making sure that I reply to each letter they send. In addition, their letters have helped me to further validate my interpretations of the conversation texts.

Chapter II

RESEARCHING THE MEANING OF PARTICIPATION IN THE TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM AT A DISTANCE

Introduction

As I have mentioned in Chapter I, the RETT project has evolved through three different programs for two target groups. Between 1978 and 1988 two programs were conducted: five sessions of an under-SLC teacher-training program and two years of a Radio Tuition English program, both for primary teachers who did not have a SLC level of education. Since 1988, with the changes made in educational policies, the RETT project started providing a 150-hour basic teacher training (BTT) program to the untrained SLC-pass teachers.[1] Although the radio-based training for teachers has already evolved through three different programs, the fundamental idea behind the implementation of the programs has always been the same, i.e., to provide an in-service learning opportunity to the primary teachers, particularly those working in the rural parts of the country. The RETT project employed several formative and summative evaluations to assess the extent to which the programs proved to be of value to the participants. However, the evaluation activities were discontinued in 1990 with the termination of the USAID funding.

While during the period between 1978 and 1983 all the formative evaluations were carried out by the RETT internal staff members with the help of evaluation specialists appointed by the USAID, formative evaluations during the period between 1984 and 1990 were carried out by CERID (Researcher Centre for Educational Innovation and Development, Tribhuvan University) (e.g., CERID 1987a; 1987b; 1988; 1989b; & 1990)[2]. From the beginning of the first phase until 1990 while the USAID still had its ties with the project, four summative evaluations were conducted by independent evaluation teams consisting of the American and Nepalese evaluation experts (Butterworth, Karmacharya, &

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[1]"The RETT project was informed in July 1987 [by the Ministry of Education and Culture] that it would henceforth conduct no programs for under-SLC teachers, but begin immediately to design, produce and implement a 150-hour Basic Teacher Training course for SLC-pass teachers" (Holmes, Karmacharya, & Mayo, 1990, p. 3).

[2]"Although rigorous formative evaluation of the scriptwriting/production/evaluation cycle was a feature of the RETT I [1978-83] project design, it was discontinued before most radio lessons or SIMs [Self Instructional Materials] had been completed. This shortcoming was cited in the project's final evaluation as one of the major reasons for its evident ineffectiveness . . . . In response, a considerable portion--roughly 11%--of RETT II's [1984-90] budget was earmarked for research and evaluation activities" (Holmes, Karmacharya, & Mayo, 1990, p. 15).

Martin 1983; Paige, Graham, & Klasek 1984; Shaw, Edgerton, & Wagley, 1987; Anzalone, & Mathema 1989). The evaluation and research activities during 1984-90 cost the project about 11% of the total RETT budget allocated for that period (Holmes, Karmacharya, & Mayo, 1990). However, the evaluation reports lacked "illuminative" information. The production of training materials and the organization of the overall project activities were not subject to improvement on the basis of "illuminative" evaluation as outlined by Parlett (1991). He has specified some key aspects of illuminative investigation which the evaluation studies of the RETT programs failed to incorporate.

Although this study is a hermeneutical investigation of the meaning of the radio-based basic teacher training (BTT) program for participants, it is also an evaluative study. While the evaluations conducted on the RETT programs consisted mostly of hard data (depicting, for example, the relationships between input of program activities, the process adopted, and the impact made on the participants in achieving certain scores in the post tests), this study is based on my personal interpretation of what the group of participants of the study have said about the radio-based BTT program, their experiences in it, and their lived conditions.

Parlett (1991) has outlined the main features of "illuminative" evaluation, some of which coincide with the approach I have taken in this study. He emphasizes that an illuminative evaluation needs to adopt a "coordinated" approach to the inquiry process. The illuminative evaluator is expected to pay attention to four features, namely "responsive, naturalistic, heuristic and interpretive," (Parlett 1991, p. 420) which fulfills the requirements of a coordinated approach. Although my research takes an interpretive approach it is not confined to Parlett's (1991) "interpretive" feature alone. The other features too are inherent characteristics of the approach I have taken. For example, I have ensured the responsive feature as I have conducted the research considering the issue of "sensitivity, the building of trust, and responsibility" (Parlett 1991, p. 421) towards the participants. Similarly, the research also incorporates Parlett's (1991) naturalistic and heuristic features. It has been conducted in the lived context of the participants and "no attempt is made to bring them under artificial conditions for purposes of [the] investigation" (p. 421). Yet, by way of probing the participants and continually returning to the emerging topics and subsequent themes of the investigation, I have made every possible attempt to come up with an interpretation that presents a critical-situational account about the experiences of the practitioners involved in the radio-based BTT program.

The interpretive approach adopted in this research maintains that the "researcher" and the participants are mutually engaged in constructing meanings. In conducting the research I have followed Carson's (1984) approach, which also is the basis for Kanu

(1993), and used conversations in interpreting and coming to an understanding of the situational practices of the participants who, in one way or another, are engaged in the BTT program. Both these authors have indicated that as the researcher and the individual participant becomes engaged in conversations on topics related to the participant's experiences and the researcher's understanding of these experiences, meanings are unfolded. Making meanings from the conversations depends upon how both the researcher and participant associate and understand each other. One of the ways for the researcher to strengthen this association and understanding is to immerse him/herself in the existential-worlds of the participants.

My study is informed by such an interpretive approach. As such I have not sought to follow a "standard methodological package" (Grace 1990, p. 22) as I often did in my past research work. Grace (1990) has indicated that since the early 1980s several researchers of distance education, particularly in the United Kingdom and Australia, have based their studies on methodologies derived from anthropology and phenomenological sociology. Acknowledging the significance of diverse approaches to educational research he convincingly argues:

> Rather than try to control for, or eliminate variables in the research setting or data which are outside the scope of the original hypothesis, qualitative researchers seek to take advantage of unforeseen developments and idiosyncratic circumstances. To do this they require flexibility in research design and freedom to adapt their methods to the particular circumstances of the setting. (p. 22)

It has always been the tendency of most of the educational research in Nepal to focus on problems by trimming and shaping them according to the researchers' preconceived notion or hypotheses about the problems. The Radio Education Teacher Training Project, in which I was one of the researchers, is one classical example of such research. The project administered a structured survey questionnaire among all the prospective participants prior to implementing its second phase. A report was then published which, in general, presented characteristics of a typical "poorly" qualified rural primary teacher (CERID, 1986). On the basis of this survey the project decided how to go about developing its radio lessons.

Although, this type of research is often thought to help us understand the phenomenon "objectively," it does not allow us to go beyond a "naive" and "surface" understanding of the phenomenon (Ricoeur, 1981). What was lacking in the survey mentioned above was qualitative and illuminative information about participants' existential-worlds.

However, it is not easy to conduct a qualitative research in the Nepalese context, especially when the research is conducted among the rural people or teachers. Teachers, particularly at the primary level, are engaged in a job which "is neither stimulating nor professionally satisfying. The level of professional motivation is very low. [Teachers'] role . . . [is] mostly passive and stylized" (CERID, 1989a, p. 2). Like the majority of farmers and laborers, primary teachers also belong to a group that has substantially low social status. Such a social status pushes them to the edge which Freire (1983) describes as a "culture of silence." Such a condition can be problematic for the researcher who seeks to ensure their trust, raising serious questions about the validity of the research. The extent to which the researcher can be sensitive to the teachers' lived conditions becomes crucial. In such research, the researcher must prove him or herself to be the valid instrument, the power of which depends upon how he or she establishes personal contacts with the participants.

Referring to similar tendencies in conducting research with distance learners Haughey (1991) argues that "one of the most common statements from learners about their hesitancy in talking to tutors was that their problem was not worthy of their tutor's attention, and they were unwilling to take up their tutor's time" (p. 20). This quote speaks to me personally because I have experienced similar situations with several groups of teachers. Like the apparently docile attitude of those distance learners quoted above, Nepalese primary teachers also seem to find it difficult to relate the chaotic educational environment prevailing in their respective "class-space"[3] to numerous other extrinsic factors, but take most of the blame on themselves.

Therefore, I am particularly interested in understanding how an innovation like the radio-based BTT program works in such an educational context. What does it mean for them to try and improve their practice, which in fact is the primary purpose of the program? By using an interpretive research method I have tried to develop a deeper understanding of the educational and social context of teachers and become involved with them in a process of constructing meaning for an "appropriate" distance learning approach to educating teachers. For that matter, an approach inherent in hermeneutics provided me with a conceptual guide to carry out this research.

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[3]I have used the term "class-space" instead of "classroom" because most of the rural primary classes do not have any room at all.

Essence of Hermeneutics

> Hermeneutics has its origin in breaches in intersubjectivity. Its field of application is comprised of all those situations in which we encounter meanings that are not immediately understandable but require interpretive effort. (Linge, 1977, p. xii)

Ever since Schleiermacher introduced hermeneutics to a broader aspect encompassing human life, outside the subdiscipline of theology, literature, or law, the field of hermeneutics has constantly been enriched by the contributions of many succeeding thinkers like Dilthey, Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Gadamer, Ricoeur, and Derrida. Oh (1986) has presented a successive development of modern hermeneutics from the time of Schleiermacher to Paul Ricoeur. A further investigation of the historical genesis of hermeneutics has not been perceived to be significantly important for this study. However, for the purposes of this study I have focused specifically on the works of Heidegger, Gadamer, Ricoeur, and Caputo. Besides these profound hermeneuts I have also considered, with some reservations on certain aspects, the critical approach taken by Paulo Freire acknowledging his honest desire to bring about change in our mystified world. I am particularly interested in the development of critical and radical hermeneutics and find it significant to my study.

Some of the specific aspects of each of the philosophers mentioned above which have been used in the research process of this study are discussed in the following section; Heidegger's profound explication about humans' "Being-in-the-world," Gadamer's emphasis on "fusion of horizon" and "effective historical consciousness," Freire's "problem posing" approach to critically inquiring into the existential reality of humans' "Being," and Ricoeur's notion of "Being in the proposed world" unfolded in front of us as we try to make sense of Being through a dialectical process of "participation" and "distanciation."

Martin Heidegger as a Radical Thinker of Hermeneutics

> Metaphysics, to use Derrida's felicitous phrase, has all along been a metaphysics of presence. From the start, it has been giving us eloquent assurances about Being and presence even as factical existence was being tossed about by *physics* and *kinesis*. Metaphysics has been trying to sell us the same bill of goods, the same *ousia*, ever since it opened for business. But a hermeneutics of facticity, convinced that life is toil and trouble (*Sorge*), would keep a watchful eye for the ruptures and the breaks and the irregularities in existence. This new hermeneutics would try not to make things look easy, to put the best face on existence, but rather to recapture the hardness of life before metaphysics showed us a fast way out the back door of the flux. (Caputo, 1987, p. 1)

In his widely celebrated work *Being and Time* Heidegger's primary intent was to problematize the metaphysical notion of Being. This work is an open criticism of traditional metaphysics from Aristotle to Hegel. The most striking feature in *Being and Time* is Heidegger's radical approach to hermeneutics and to the meaning of Being. Throughout his hermeneutic enterprise Heidegger stood against Kantian and Cartesian epistemologies of objective rationality and continuously searched for the fundamental ontology of Being. In a sense, all his life he lived within the question which was fundamental to his own thought: the question of Being. The hermeneutics of facticity that Heidegger pursued in *Being and Time*, "had come to mean restoring the original difficulty in Being" (Caputo, 1987, p. 2). Moreover, Heidegger, through *Being and Time*, had made a profound contribution in explicating Husserl's incomplete project on phenomenology expressed in his controversial concepts between the " life-world, precisely distinguished by him as the pregiven foundation of all higher theory, [and] . . . his previous idealistic theory, which insisted on the transcendental constitution of the world by the ego" (Miller, 1982, p. 146).

Heidegger took up this project to make it clear by situating life and its meaning in its original difficulty. Like Nietzsche, he was aware of modern society's diminishing potential for human excellence and stressed going down to the very foundations by questioning the root causes that had supposedly made human existence possible. For him, human existence was being deceptively fixed by the transcendental and self-evident world of objective entities. He found it important to retrieve the broader capacity inherent in human existence that had truly transcended the Being. By way of disclosing the concept of *Desein*, that is the ontology of Being, Heidegger had radicalized the basis of ontological understanding of human existence presented by other forebears whose contributions too, to the successive development of modern hermeneutics, were equally profound.

To be truthful to our efforts in understanding the meaning of Being it is necessary for us to make it plain the barriers that have prevented us from reaching the very foundation from where we ought to start our investigation. Heidegger's fundamental hermeneutic question was directed towards such barriers innate in the deceptive presuppositions of Being that were inherent in ancient ontology. The three such presuppositions he identified were: Being is most universal, it is indefinable, and it is self-evident. By surfacing the inconsistencies of such preconditions he made it "plain not only that the question of Being lacks an *answer*, but that the question itself is obscure and without direction. So if it is to be retrieved, this means that we must first work out an adequate way of *formulating* it" (Heidegger, 1967, p. 24).

The point that Heidegger seemed to have made is that inquiry about "Being" cannot be started afresh. "Being" is already present. "Thus to work out the question of Being adequately, we must make an entity—the inquirer—transparent in his own Being" (Heidegger, 1967, p. 27). Obviously, in trying to ask the question of Being (What *is* Being?) we should be trying to find a place in the circular nature of "Being's" inquiry as opposed to making a brand new start. Perhaps, the presuppositions of traditional metaphysics of which Heidegger was critical hindered us from finding such a place in a circular understanding of Being. It must be for this very reason that he insisted on *re-formulating* the question of Being. It can be understood from Heidegger's thesis that each of us has *already* come to be a Being and live a form of life in this world. So, it would be absurd to search for a different kind of living without any reference to our already lived conditions. Heidegger (1967) writes:

> The question of Being aims therefore at ascertaining the *a priori* conditions not only for the possibility of the sciences which examine entities as entities of such and such a type, and in so doing, already operate with an understanding of Being, but also for the possibility of those ontologies themselves which are prior to the ontical sciences and which provide their foundations. (p. 31)

By distinguishing between "authentic" and "unauthentic" ways of being human Heidegger pointed out that an unauthentic person conforms with the traditional beliefs as given and take them for granted whereas an authentic person lives in a tension between these taken for granted conditions and a set of possibilities opened through his or her own choices. The beauty of Heidegger's fundamentalized hermeneutics lies in his concern towards the search for this "authenticity" of human beings. The fundamental difference between his and the forebears of hermeneutic theory such as Schleiermacher and Dilthey has largely to do with this notion of "authentic" being. In taking over Schleiermacher's hermeneutic project for further exploration as the art of understanding, Dilthey did not stay away from the Kantian epistemology in order to understand lived experience of human being. For him such lived experiences were expressed in the form of great works of art and text (Palmer, 1969). What could have been disturbing to Heidegger is the confinement of the hermeneutic enterprise merely to the *methodically-based* understanding and interpretations of historical knowledge about human existence. For Heidegger, the fundamental task of hermeneutics was not to provide a *method* but to ask appropriate questions about the essence of being human and unfold the presuppositions under which we have constructed our worlds.

In a radical sense, therefore, the task of hermeneutics "is to recollect the contours and textures of the life we are already living, a life which is not secured by the methods we

can wield to render such a life our object" (Jardine, 1992, p. 116). Such an orientation of hermeneutics suggests that an inquiry based strictly on a scientific method restricts us from posing appropriate questions about our being. The implications of Heidegger's works are, therefore, profound. His far-reaching contributions to the theory of modern hermeneutics were acknowledged in the points expressed by Miller (1982):

> In addition to discarding the Cartesian dualism dividing mind and body, Heidegger was concerned to show the formative significance of states of mind, such as moods, emotions, fears; instead of assuming rational judgment as a distinctive and universal human attribute, he presented it as merely *one mode* of existence, *one way* of approaching the world. In opposition to any transcendental idea of Reason, Heidegger substituted an interpretation of human beings as the sole source of reasons: through their own transcending freedom, by the ways of being human they chose, it was men alone who brought reason to life. (p. 148, emphasis added)

Gadamer 's Self-criticism and Fusion of Horizon as a Way to Achieving Effective Historical Consciousness

Gadamer carried through the basic foundation of Heidegger's hermeneutic philosophy. Hermeneutics for Gadamer, too, was not a methodical and technically-based approach to inquiry into human sciences. The basic philosophy of hermeneutics, that it is the art of interpreting human phenomenon, remained the same with Gadamer's hermeneutic enterprise. The concept that "nature we explain, the life of the soul we understand," (Dilthey quoted in Howard, 1982, p. 16) seems to have guided him throughout his endeavors into his philosophical hermeneutics. Pointing out the limitations of the dominant position of scientific rationality in the development of the concept of knowledge and truth related to human sciences, Gadamer (1975) asserted:

> From its historical origin, the problem of hermeneutics goes beyond the limits that the concept of method sets to modern science. The understanding and interpretation of texts is not merely a concern of science, but is obviously part of the total human experience of the world. . . . The phenomenon of understanding not only pervades all human relations to the world. It also has an independent validity within science and resists any attempt to change it into a method of science. (pp. xi-xii)

The important aspect of Gadamer's contributions to philosophical hermeneutics had a lot to do with his own experiences of living as a sensitive youth in a turbulent period in Germany after the First World War. In a recent article Gadamer (1991) made clear what influenced his early works. It was natural for him to be fascinated by the emerging concept of practical philosophy that criticized Neokantian epistemology at the time. This period, for him, "was the end of an age: the age of liberalism, the unlimited belief in progress, and the unquestioned leadership of science within cultural life" (Gadamer, 1991, p. 14).

Gadamer's works were particularly influenced by Soren Kirkegaard's critique of Hegel's ideal of absolute knowledge and Edmund Husserl's position against that epistemology which justified science in terms of transcendental philosophy. There are interesting comments that Gadamer quotes from these two great thinkers: Kierkegaard commenting on Hegel's absolutism of knowledge asserted that "the absolute professor in Berlin has forgotten about existing" while Husserl, rejecting science as the transcendental philosophy, used to say in his seminar "no large bills, gentlemen, small change" (Quoted in Gadamer, 1991, p. 14-15).

While being engaged in the brilliant project concerning Socratic questioning of the good in Platonic-Aristotelian philosophy, Gadamer started playing with basic phenomenological and hermeneutic questions. The question he asked himself was "how one could speak of an ethics in Plato's adoption of the Socratic question and Socratic dialectic" (Gadamer, 1991, p. 16). He was interested to pursue further what he called the "life-worldly" background of Plato's "dialectic" philosophy. Indeed, Gadamer's contribution in linking philosophy with the life-world of early 20th century Germany was an outcome of his study of Plato's dialectic philosophy. His work shed light on the common emphasis of both Plato and Aristotle on the necessity of practical philosophy and practical metaphysics in their pursuit of the Socratic question of good. More specifically, Gadamer (1991) acknowledged the "indissoluble entanglement of theoretical and practical-political orientations of life, of theoretical and practical knowledge, [which] testifies to the continuity of the Socratic question that binds Plato and Aristotle to one another, and both to every human present (*Gegenwart*)" (p. 18).

Most of all, particularly in the context of this study, Gadamer's search of Platonic scholarship is significant in that he kept finding himself entangled in a fundamental problem of hermeneutics which he specifically identified as a problem of "linguisticality of understanding." In his hermeneutics *Sprache*, that is language and speech, is central (Smith, 1991, p. 23). For him it was important to interpret the Greek text of Plato's *Philebus* without disconnecting it from the current life-world in which Gadamer himself lived. In his later work *Truth and Method*, his concept of prejudice as a precondition of all understanding was informed by this original concern of "linguisticality."

In order to make clear the concept of prejudices as a condition of understanding, Gadamer built upon Heidegger's idea of fore-meaning and the circularity of hermeneutic inquiry. Gadamer acknowledged the conditions laid out by Heidegger that we need to make sure that our fore-meaning is neither arbitrary nor removed from our being while we are engaged in a process of text interpretation. It is only through the process of a "working-out" of the fore-meaning that allows us to come to an understanding of a text.

The circular nature of hermeneutic inquiry is in fact our continuous and conscious assimilation of our own fore-meaning and prejudices while being involved in the hermeneutic task of making meaning out of texts.

By acknowledging that prejudices are necessarily the constituent elements of our being we can step forward to come to a better understanding of what it is that goes on in our present life and what the possibilities are in front of us. In this sense our prejudices function positively allowing us to see our inevitable situatedness in tradition. The recognition of one's own prejudices, therefore, becomes an important aspect in our task of text interpretation. In trying to hear when a text tells us as something new we have to be open-minded and "sensitive to the text's quality of newness" (Gadamer, 1975, p. 238). And for Gadamer (1975), "the important thing is to be aware of one's own bias, so that the text may present itself in all its newness and thus be able to assert its own truth against one's own fore-meaning" (p. 238).

In our coming into Being we cannot be separated from our own historicity which makes it inevitable for us to form within ourselves certain kinds of prejudices. Prejudices in themselves are not bad things. However, if one's prejudice does not acknowledge others' prejudices, then it closes off possibilities in the task of a hermeneutic understanding of human phenomenon. Gadamer saw this kind of prejudice against other prejudices inherent in the enlightenment philosophy of the West. He made it clear:

> The recognition that all understanding inevitably involves some prejudice gives the hermeneutical problem its real thrust. In light of this insight it appears that *historicism, despite its critique of rationalism and of natural law philosophy, is based on the modern Enlightenment and unwittingly shares its prejudices*. And there is one prejudice of the Enlightenment that defines its essence: the fundamental prejudice of the Enlightenment is the prejudice against prejudice itself, which denies tradition its power. (Gadamer, 1993, p. 270, emphasis original)

Romanticism, as Gadamer asserted, defended the authority of tradition against the enlightenment philosophy that placed importance on reason for the historical knowledge—including that of various forms of myths—to be justifiable. The contribution of romanticism was that it gave birth to the modern enlightenment philosophy that acknowledged tradition and historical knowledge as having justifications which were outside the realm of reason. Gadamer (1993) writes:

> If the Enlightenment considers it an established fact that all tradition that reason shows to be impossible (i.e., nonsense) can only be understood historically—i.e., by going back to the past's way of looking at things—then the historical consciousness that emerges in romanticism involves a radicalization of the Enlightenment. (p. 275)

In romanticism, objectified historical knowledge replaced scientific reasons of enlightenment in order for it to be legitimate. However, although it appeared that romanticism made a significant correction in the enlightenment tradition, the basic approach to discrediting all prejudices became universal and radical even in romanticism. Gadamer viewed the type of historical consciousness, that romanticism claimed to have achieved through historical research, as being disconnected from our present and existential being. It is at this point, Gadamer (1975) asserted, that "the attempt to arrive at an historical hermeneutics has to start its critique" (p. 244).

On the basis of his arguments of prejudices as conditions of understanding Gadamer (1975) contended that a fundamental rehabilitation of tradition and authority was necessary if we were to do justice to our "finite, historical mode of being" (p. 246). In constructing all truths by reason Descartes considered our "blind obedience" to authority and tradition as the source of error. But for Gadamer authority of a person does not lead others to become blindly obedient. It is his or her wider view and superiority of knowledge that place an individual to such an authoritative position. "This is connected with the fact that authority cannot actually be bestowed, but is acquired and must be acquired, if someone is to lay claim to it" (Gadamer, 1975, p. 248). Tradition is one form of authority, which was acknowledged by romanticism, that influence our attitudes and behavior.

The problem that Gadamer saw in romantic acceptance of authority of tradition was that of the unconditional antithesis between tradition and reason. Tradition, for him, must be affirmed, embraced, and cultivated. Although it may appear that tradition is merely preserved by these activities, it is also a call for us to stand within tradition to come up with new traditions and new values. It is clear in Gadamer's argument that our understanding of tradition should not be limited to an objectified understanding but it requires that it be a process of recognizing ourselves within the realm of traditional values. So this understanding becomes the antithesis of enlightenment tradition when it reconstructs tradition by pure reason. At the same time, although romantic critique of enlightenment is an antithesis of reason, romanticism itself becomes an antithesis in Gadamer's hermeneutics of human sciences when the concept of reason is embedded in its understanding of tradition and authority. Tradition and authority must, therefore, be acknowledged with a much more open mind, but not with blind obedience to them, in the process of understanding human sciences. In this regard Gadamer (1975) had pointed out that

> understanding in human sciences shares one fundamental condition with the continuity of traditions, namely, that it lets itself be addressed by tradition. .

> . . The effect of a living tradition and the effect of historical study must constitute a unity, the analysis of which would reveal only a texture of reciprocal relationships. (p. 251)

Along with a call to rehabilitate authority and tradition, Gadamer made a link between historical consciousness and the concept of the "classical." There are normative historical factors which constitute a particular classical work. But the norms are created and re-created for the work to become classical. As well, not only does the classical work fulfill the requirements of a general historical stylistic concept but also "is capable of being extended to any 'development' to which an immanent telos gives unity" (Gadamer, 1975, p. 256). According to Gadamer (1975), the classical work is preserved historical knowledge and at the same time is "timeless" and can speak to the present to signify itself with an openness to be interpreted. Through such classical works we experience some kind of historical fusion of the past with the present.

Gadamer's description of such a virtue of the classical followed his wondering: "Does this kind of historical fusion . . . that characterizes what is classical, ultimately lie at the base of the whole historical attitude as its effective substratum?" (p. 258). Taking a stance against romantic hermeneutics (which he considered to be ahistorical) he shed light on the importance of self-criticism of historical consciousness. Such an activity allows us to come out of the either-or discourse of subjectivity and objectivity in the process of understanding our tradition, and places ourselves "within the process of tradition, in which present and past are constantly fused" (Gadamer, 1975, p. 258).

The key to understanding a text in Gadamer's hermeneutic enterprise is our willingness to be open to self-criticism while making meaning out of a text. This, for him, should also be manifest in the process of making meaning out of our conversation with others. In such a process we become aware of both our and others' prejudices. But, in order for what he called the "fusion of horizons" and "effective historical consciousness" to occur (Gadamer, 1975, p. 273), our simple awareness of both our and others' prejudices is not enough. We should be able to hear others with a willingness to go beyond our own prejudices. We are in a constant process of forming new prejudices with a conscious mind that acknowledges others' prejudices. In essence, such a hermeneutic experience allows us to come to a realization that there is not an end point in the process of understanding and no knowledge is an absolute knowledge. Such a perception eventually accommodates or overlays our and others' prejudices in concentric circles of hermeneutic understanding thereby allowing for an effective historical consciousness and a fusion of horizons.

Gadamer's contention calls for a more open and accommodating relationship between self and others. Such relationships are different from those between the narcissistic "I" and relationships in which others are understood objectively and "My"

prejudices take precedence over others'. They are also different from another type of relationship in which the "I" acknowledges others' prejudices, but there is a problem of mutual recognition and reconciliation. The "I" may not be comfortable to allow his or her own prejudices to be changed although he or she becomes aware of and acknowledges others' prejudices. Such a problem hinders one from achieving the effective historical consciousness and fusion of horizons. Therefore, for Gadamer, it is important that we not only recognize and acknowledge others' prejudices but also situate ourselves among these prejudices and be involved in a most humane act of hermeneutic understanding. This is where an "effective historical consciousness" can be reached and a "fusion of horizons" can be realized.

Critical Consciousness as an Approach to Understanding: Hermeneutic Ingredients in Freire's Philosophy

The term "hermeneutics" might not have been common in Freire' s critical writings but "the way in which he defines his problems and the manner in which he addresses them are hermeneutical through and through" (Peters, & Lankshear, 1990, p. 127). Like many other contemporary philosophers of hermeneutics his work extensively explored our coming into Being in the world as human beings. He also attempted to unfold the existential reality of human beings which, however, was basically informed by an intellectual orientation of Marxist tradition particularly that of Habermas. Freire's (1983) pedagogy, as explicit in his book *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, implied that education should necessarily be a political act in which the learners' primary tasks must involve a critical reading of the world where they belong.

Freire, like Heidegger, was explicit—and as such coincided with the hermeneutic trend—that being is not a metaphysical abstraction (Peters, & Lankshear, 1990). Instead, he pointed out that humans come into being who they are because of the connectedness of their being to history and society. Pointing out the historicity of our being in Freire's philosophy Giroux (1985) has written that

> history is used by Freire in a twofold sense: on the one hand it reveals in existing institutions and social relations the historical context that informs their meaning and the legacy that both hides and clarifies their political function. On the other hand, Freire points to the sedimented history that constitutes who we are as historical and social beings. (p. xxiv)

It is the historical vocation inherent in our being that makes human beings different from other living and non-living things in the world. Human beings have a capability of comprehending their relationships with the world and with the other human beings. This is why Freire (1974; 1985) contended that while animals are merely in the world, humans are

both *in* the world and *with* the world. For him, therefore, humans' consciousness about the way they are related to each other and to the world signifies their beingness.

> Men can fulfill the necessary condition of being *with* the world because they are able to gain objective distance from it. Without this objectification, whereby man also objectifies himself, man would be limited to being *in* the world, lacking both self-knowledge and knowledge of the world. (Freire, 1985, p. 68)

In Freire's philosophy humans' capability to critically relate to their world is crucial because his *Pedagogy of the oppressed* is entirely based on this human virtue. It is because of humans' act of reflection that such capacity to critically relate to others is possible. Parallel to what Alfred North Whitehead (1959) asserted, that "as we think, we live" Freire focused on reflection—also an act of thinking—as a distinct human act that allows them to become critically conscious of themselves and their reality. Humans' capability to reflect upon their own action and reality makes them different from animals who while confronting any incident in their reality act merely through reflex. Humans have capability to distance themselves from their reality and their activity. Humans' consciousness functions through their *intentionality* towards the world and through their awareness of *temporality* which further signify their consciousness and action as being "distinct from the mere contacts of animals with the world" (Freire, 1985, p. 68).

In being human we not only limit our consciousness in knowing our reality and the world but also we become involved in *actions* so as to change the world into a place where we want to live as more fully human. For Freire only this kind of knowing is an authentic knowing which is achieved through praxis. Even for the word, which we speak in a dialogical encounter with others, to be authentic it is required that it be a praxis (Freire, 1983). In other words, our authentic knowing of the world and speaking the true word must involve both reflection and action. Thus to know truly and "to speak a true word is to transform the world" (Freire, 1983, p. 75).

Freire's emphasis on action is not an arbitrary one. It is linked to the humans' exclusive consciousness about *time* which is conceived in terms of past, present, and future. This awareness of the dimension of time makes humans conscious of their temporality. Through a continuous interplay of reflection and action we, at one and the same time, become conscious that the past human actions have shaped our present reality and that through our present praxis we are in a process of transforming this reality. This concept of action and reflection coupled with the dimension of time suggests that humans were, are, and will be in a process of *becoming*. But more than what they have already become, Freire seemed to be interested in what they can become as a consequence of their present actions. For him, "authentic being is that which is consciously directed at

becoming more fully human" (Peters, & Lankshear, 1990, p. 129). In order to necessitate humans' ontological and historical vocation to become more fully human Freire, in a hermeneutic fashion, pointed out that becoming fully human is a never-completed task but is an on-going process.

However, Freire (1983) made it clear that this critical consciousness and humans' capacity to continuously transform their being into more fully human cannot be perceived by a "naive thinker." There is an entirely different perception of time among the bearers of naive consciousness compared with those of critical consciousness. For the naive thinker the present is shaped by the past and as such our present actions should conform to the norms set by the past. On this account Freire (1983) wrote that the naive thinker "sees 'historical time as a weight, a stratification of the acquisitions and experiences of the past,' from which the present should emerge normalized and 'well-behaved'" (p. 81). Such a perception of historical time and a conformity towards tradition constitutes a present reality which is fixed and given. By adapting to such a fixed and given reality humans close off the possibilities of becoming more fully human through naming and re-naming the world and re-making themselves.

The important thing for the critical thinker "is the continuing transformation of reality, on behalf of the continuing humanization of men" (Freire, 1983, p. 81). In critical thinking, therefore, historical time is not perceived as a powerful tool that alone directs our present action forbidding us from questioning tradition and being critically aware of the present reality. It is in the knowledge of the critically conscious person that "humans are *in* time but not *submerged* in time. They can enter into the gaps between events thereby shaping the events that occur subsequently. They can enter into reality in the present and, acting on what they inherit from the past, shape future reality" (Peters, & Lankshear, 1990, p. 130).

Most importantly, Freire reminded us of our temporality. By being aware of such a temporality humans can begin to act to free themselves from a state of naive consciousness. It is up to us whether to remain naively conscious and be objects of history or transcend ourselves from the state of such naiveté and become subjects of history. However, what remains crucial, according to Freire, is that as human beings we ought to speak *true* words, we ought to strive for *authentic* knowledge, and we ought to be aware of our *temporality*. And in order to fulfill all these characteristics of human actions we are required to be involved in praxis. To be involved in praxis means not to allow tradition to act upon us and become objects but rather objectify tradition in order to distanciate and critically understand it. Only by existing as subjects of history can humans transform and thereby humanize reality. In order to comply with what Freire called humans' ontological and

historical vocation of becoming more fully human, it seems fundamental for us to first of all recognize the presence of naiveté in our consciousness and then be involved in the process of praxis to become critically conscious which is in Freire's term, a state of "Conscientization."

Paul Ricoeur's Proposition for Complementarity between Explanation and Understanding as a Dialectical Process of Making Meanings

In the hermeneutic tradition since Dilthey many discussions have taken place in the issue of how human sciences must be approached and understood. There has been a clear dichotomy and exclusiveness in interpreting human and natural sciences. Studying nature means "explaining" it while knowledge related to human sciences must be acquired through "understanding." Ricoeur saw a serious problem in such exclusive ways of studying the two sciences. For him both explanation and understanding are necessary conditions for text "appropriation." He attempted to re-orient hermeneutic projects by incorporating a dialectic mixture of both explanation and understanding.

This dialectical character of Ricoeur's inquiry into hermeneutics opened up a whole new horizon allowing us to find a linkage between the subjective and the objective dimensions in our act of text interpretation. For him, it is important that we "appropriate" text in order to make it our own. By appropriating text the interpreter becomes an integral part of the text which prevents him or her from getting lost in the "naive subjectivism" and thereby interpretation culminates in self-understanding (Ricoeur, 1981). Such an approach to text interpretation is essentially an act of both distanciation and participation. As well, it removes from the interpreter the necessity of making a choice between the two extremes of absolutism and skepticism and rather involves him or her in a process of understanding the dialogue between epistemology and ontology (Oh, 1986).

Ricoeur (1981) asserted that in order for human sciences to remain as sciences it is inevitable that its study incorporate both intuitive and objective dimensions. But in the tradition of modern hermeneutics the concept of explanation has been expelled from the realm of human sciences. This total rejection of explanation from the study of human sciences prevailed ever since Dilthey reaffirmed the concept that "nature we explain, the life of soul we understand" (Howard, 1982, p. 16). But how can we really understand the human phenomenon without explaining some degree of its constituent elements? Should interpretation of a text be exclusively psychological?

Ricoeur accepted the crucial role that language plays in text interpretation. But he pointed out that the psychological interpretation *of* language, through which a text represents itself, may cause illusion. One might get into an illusion of being able to

interpret the language *of* the text without first of all interpreting *by* language. In other words Ricoeur seemed to have pointed out that in the process of text interpretation the interpreter cannot exclude *explanation* from his or her interpretation of the text *by* the language involved in the process. The dialectical relationship between explanation and understanding is inevitable as the reader is confronted first with the internal relations and overall structure of the text, and later with the task of finding self within the realm of the text. By engaging in the task of explaining the text the reader sets the stage to appropriate the text for his or her present "being-in-the-world." In this way the task of text interpretation incorporates both epistemological and ontological dimensions which essentially fulfills the requirements of Ricoeur's dialectical hermeneutics.

For Ricoeur, as for the other forerunners of hermeneutics, the purpose of text interpretation was not to understand the author's subjectivity but to be involved in self-understanding and to situate oneself in the "proposed world" of the text. But Ricoeur (1981) asserted that such a self-understanding and the appropriation of the text essentially require the interpreter to distanciate from, as well as participate in, the "world unfolded in front of the text" (p. 141).

One of Ricoeur's arguments necessitating such a distanciation in the process of text interpretation centered around the distinctive character of inscribed text compared with a text experienced during an on-going conversation. The reader of the inscribed text does not have the same relationship with its author as does a listener with a speaker. In other words, unlike in a typical face-to-face conversation, interpretation of an inscribed text takes place in isolation in which case the interpreter has a great deal of autonomy in making choices of his or her "proposed world" in front of the text. The interpreter, in such a situation of text interpretation, is allowed to distanciate from the historical conditions under which the text was written. Moreover, the text presents itself like an open book for anyone interested to immerse in it without being dictated by the intents of its author. Ricoeur viewed this situation as being an enabling condition for proposing a world full of possibilities through a dialectical encounter of the reader with the text.

The dialectical hermeneutic which Ricoeur proposed prevented hermeneutics from drifting towards the opposite end of the other ideologies, particularly that of critical social theory. Expulsion of explanation from the studies of human sciences meant creation of a boundary around hermeneutics and a disregard of the inevitable and inseparable link between epistemology and ontology—the link which, in fact, is embedded in our being and is a key to the continuity of our being. Ricoeur's contribution is therefore profound in keeping hermeneutics at its right position, not letting it become yet another ideology. Only by being able to restore the capacity of incorporating the diverse nature of our being, and

by being open and sensitive to discourse of all kinds, will hermeneutics accomplish its genuine historical purpose and remain authentic. There is no standard method that can be conceived of in such a profound task of hermeneutics. The dialectical relationship between understanding and explanation that Ricoeur talked about does not refer to any standard method. In an interpretation of a text the mode of the dialogue depends upon the individual reader and the way he or she encounters the text. This argument might lead one to be skeptical about the validity of the interpretation which Ricoeur himself did not find unusual. However, he asserted that the same text can be construed in more than one way but there are no so called "rules of thumb" which each of these ways would have to comply with. He went on to argue:

> The logic of validation allows us to move between two limits of dogmatism and skepticism. It is always possible to argue for or against an interpretation, to confront interpretations, to arbitrate between them and to seek for an agreement, even if this agreement remains beyond our reach. (Ricoeur, 1977, p. 331)

It is therefore evident in Ricoeur's dialectical hermeneutics that the complexity, or rather the multivocality and multiperspectivity, in the task of communicating and understanding texts is clearly acknowledged. By recognizing this form of hermeneutics we become conscious of the enormous potential of a text that presents itself as a "platform" where an individual of any history, tradition, or culture can comfortably stand and experience the uniqueness of his or her coming into being in this world and yet be sensitive to the individuality of other human beings. Through a dialectical interaction of participation and distanciation with the text we in the process of its interpretation can experience this kind of complementarity between self and others. This aspect is what Ricoeur seemed to have emphasized in his dialectic hermeneutics.

Application of Phenomenological Hermeneutics in the Field of Curriculum

Aoki was introduced to the field of phenomenology by his Ph. D. advisee, Max van Manen, at the University of Alberta in 1972 (Pinar, & Reynolds, 1992b). Later in the decade, Aoki, with van Manen, became instrumental "in establishing the Department of Secondary Education as the North Americam centre for phenomenological—or, more broadly, human science—studies in curriculum" (Pinar, & Reynolds, 1992b, p. 239). Aoki's understanding of phenomenology and hermeneutics is rooted not only in his scholarly activities in the universities of Alberta and British Columbia, but also in his "illustrious nineteen-year career as a teacher and principal in the public schools of southern

Alberta" (Jacknicke, 1991, p. i). Currently a Professor Emeritus, Aoki is actively engaged in hermeneutical construction of narratives of teaching.

Aoki's phenomenological and hermeneutical interest was reflected in his paper, *Towards Curriculum Inquiry in a New Key* (Aoki, 1978). His work indicated, as he acknowledged, that he has "been influenced greatly by the writing of Jurgen Habermas, principally, *Knowledge and Human Interest*" (Aoki, 1984, p. 18). Informed by Habermas (1971) and with an interest to inquire into the relationship between knowledge and human interests, Aoki built upon the three forms of knowledge known as strict science, hermeneutic science, and critical science that Habermas (1971) proposed arguing "that knowledge cannot be separated from human interests, and therefore the underlying assumptions which we hold determine how we come to know the world" (Jacknicke, & Rowell, 1987, pp. 62-63).

In their article *Alternative Orientations for Educational Research* Jacknicke and Rowell (1987) have further linked the three evaluation orientations to educational research and called them empirical-analytic inquiry orientation, situational interpretative inquiry orientation, and critically reflective inquiry orientation. In order to understand Aoki's contribution in the field of curriculum studies a brief introduction of the three orientations is presented below.

Empirical-Analytic Inquiry Orientation

Werner (1984) has convincingly presented the concept of this orientation by using an analogy of a Macdonald's hamburger stand. The organization and management of such a firm "is based upon the values of *control*, *certainty*, *efficiency*, *precision*, *cost effectiveness*, *predictability*, *standardization*, and *speed*" (Werner, 1984, p. 22, emphasis original).

According to Aoki (1984) the concerns inherent in the end-means or technical orientation reflect an instrumental approach to curriculum evaluation. According to him, the Tyler Rationale,[4] which is the mainstream rationale of curriculum development and/or evaluation in North America, has this instrumental characteristic and is technically oriented.

People who are guided by the technical orientation tend to view the world objectively. Their attempts to study any phenomenon involve control and precision. Personal beliefs and the social interests that individuals possess should not interfere with the act of knowing the phenomenon.

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[4]See Aoki (1984) for details about this rationale.

> This orientation allows for the study of humans and their natural world independent of the social interests of the researchers or of those researched, since reality is accepted as given and existing apart from humans themselves. (Jacknicke, & Rowell, 1987, p. 64).

Knowing is based strictly on standard methods. The knower is engaged in determining the relationships between the ends and means that contribute the occurrence of any phenomenon that is being studied by the knower. On the basis of such a knowledge the knower "attempts to explain how things work and to predict the features of phenomena still to occur" (Jacknicke, & Rowell, 1987, p. 64).

Curriculum reconceptualists trying to broaden the scope of the curriculum field are concerned that the majority of research in the educational communities all over North America are heavily influenced by this orientation (Apple, 1975; Aoki, 1984; Hanson, 1985; Jacknicke, & Rowell, 1987). Many Nepalese teacher educators who are presently holding responsible positions in the country's educational system were trained in the United States during 1960s and 70s. They too are oriented by the technical view. It was only during 1970s that alternative views of curriculum development, particularly the phenomenological movement, began to spread its roots[5]. In the present educational context, although the movement still remains "marginalized" in the United States, there is a growing concern among the curriculum scholars that other views too be integrated in the field (Pinar, & Reynolds, 1992a). So, while in North America alternative views are gradually being recognized and acknowledged, in Nepal the legacy of positivism is still the only source of knowledge in the process of curriculum planning.

Situational Interpretive Inquiry Orientation

Unlike the technical orientation, the educational researchers influenced by situational interpretive orientation acknowledge that knowledge which has been generated in the course of understanding meanings is specific to a particular curriculum experience by individuals belonging to a particular situation. In this orientation humans living in a situation are understood to be "social beings possessing intentionality leading to action (acting upon the world), and giving personal meanings to [the situation] . . . by interpreting events around themselves" (Jacknicke, & Rowell, 1987, p. 65). Knowledge about human interest and the meanings that human beings give to their lived situation cannot be

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[5]According to Pinar and Reynolds (1992a, p. vii) the University of Alberta, took a leading role in this movement.

objectively generated. In a social setting people may give different meanings to the same situation where they all live.

Because of such a nature of social phenomena, a researcher influenced by the situational interpretive orientation tends to emphasize the necessity of living in the situation in order to be able to evaluate the curriculum being implemented. Such living, according to Aoki (1984), may be possible through sensitive human interactions initiated by "communication between [person and person]" (p. 9). It is required of the researcher to be involved in developing an insight into human experiences as socially lived by attempting to clarify and authenticate, and by "bringing into full human awareness the meaning the social actors give to the activities in the situation" (Aoki, 1984, p. 9). In the course of developing such an insight, the evaluator or the researcher may have to be engaged in uncovering "the unsaid or unmentioned" (Jacknicke, & Rowell, 1987, p. 67).

Critically Reflective Inquiry Orientation

A critically orientated evaluator tries to bring into full view the underlying assumptions of the program which he or she evaluates. The program takes the form it does because of the particular perspectives or beliefs that people involved in it have. Often the perspectives are "taken-for-granted and therefore, hidden from view" (Aoki, 1984, p. 11).

While the empirical-analytic orientation takes into account theory-based (second-order) interpretations of educational programs, the situational-interpretive orientation focuses on the first-order meaning that people involved give to the programs. But, critically-reflective inquiry orientation tends to ask questions that seek a deeper understanding of the programs than what could be understood through the other two inquiry orientations. In the critical orientation the first or second-order descriptive accounts are problematized in order to make explicit what propels humans' actions.

A critically reflective activity is guided by "interest in revealing the root condition that makes knowing possible, or in revealing the underlying human and social conditions that distort human existence, distortions that tends to alienate man" (Aoki, 1984, p. 11). Such a critical knowing or critical reflection provides humans with reasons that seek purposive actions for social transformation. In the words of Jacknicke and Rowell (1987):

> [A] critical reflection, has with it the notion that humans have the potential to change their situations, and the realization of this potential is dependent upon the awakening of their awareness to their situations in order that they may broaden their choices for action. (p. 76)

Reflection on Hermeneutic Approaches

It was Heidegger who in fact had initiated radicalization of hermeneutics by asking the radical question of Being as presence, and by letting it remain open. In order to resist any easy answer to the question of Being as presence, Heidegger kept the question hanging and provided a dynamism towards unleashing every possible meaning informed by such a ***kinesis***. In pointing out such a characteristic in Heidegger's hermeneutic endeavor, Caputo (1987) writes:

> In Being and Time, the hermeneutics of facticity assumed the dimensions of a deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence and of a new raising of the question of Being; it had come to mean restoring the original difficulty in Being. (p. 2)

The task of metaphysics, unlike the radical thinking of Heidegger, was to make the human phenomenon easily graspable and provide it superficial support so that a state of equilibrium is established. Along with Heidegger, others engaged in down-playing such an aspect of metaphysics were Johannes Climacus and other Kierkegaardian pseudonyms such as Constantin Constantius. Caputo (1987) put them in the category of individuals involved in "the great project of hermeneutic trouble-making" (p. 2).

As Caputo (1987) mentioned in the introductory chapter of his book *Radical hermeneutics: Repetition, deconstruction, and the hermeneutic project*, the fundamental aspect of radical hermeneutics is to "restore life to its original difficulty." In view of this aspect every claim that philosophy and metaphysics makes is put into question.

While Heidegger's hermeneutic project fits in this radicalizing process, some later thinkers like Gadamer and Ricoeur found it necessary to give some degree of acknowledgment to the metaphysical aspect in the hermeneutic inquiries into human sciences. Because of such a stance Gadamer is criticized in that although he built on Heidegger's foreknowledge or pre-knowledge in explicating humans' prejudices by which they enter into text interpretation and understanding, Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics "cuts off Heidegger's self-criticism in midstream" (Caputo, 1987, p. 6). As has been discussed earlier, Gadamer's philosophic hermeneutics attempts to rehabilitate tradition and the experience of belonging in human sciences which signifies his effort to move beyond Heidegger's radical questioning about Being. In other words, it is based on the faith that tradition provides the foundation of all understanding. However, Gadamer's hermeneutic project seems to be equally significant in the sense that it has prevented our task of text interpretation and understanding from merely becoming an historical regression and being trapped into anarchism.

Similarly, for Ricoeur, the radical and exclusive attribution of explanation to natural sciences and understanding to human sciences makes hermeneutics and critiques no more

than ideologies. As well, it can be inferred from his approach, that simply by looking for the breaks and the ruptures of life and making it difficult we cannot be sure that it will not pave the way to anarchism and nihilism. Ricoeur (1981), therefore, took up a hermeneutic project that not only questions our existential reality but also proposes a world "wherein [we] could project one of our ownmost possibilities" (p. 142).

Lately the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, as already discussed earlier, came up with his critical ideas which, although in some ways fulfill the radical conditions implicit in the hermeneutic project of those "trouble makers," conform more to critical hermeneutics. For him, it is our consciousness as intentionality towards the world and our actions and reflections (praxis), not the metaphysics of presence, that provide the basis for authentic knowing of ourselves and our reality. While the other philosophers of radical hermeneutics were critical of the transcendental philosophy of metaphysics, Freire's concerns mainly centered on the authenticity of our being as fully human. His claim that it is humans' ontological and historical vocation to become more fully human, however, that constitutes some elements of metaphysics. While he acknowledged that in the process of making and remaking the world humans themselves are constantly becoming, he seemed to indicate that "there are certain normative conditions which must be met for human engagement with the world to be truly humanizing" (Peters, & Lankshear, 1990, p. 130). In the realm of radical hermeneutics, however, this sort of metaphysical view has always been questionable from the point of view of its existential legitimacy.

There is a strong urge in Freire's philosophy for human beings to reflect and act (praxis) in order to humanize their being-in-the-world. He has asked humans to become subjects rather than objects of history in order to act and transform their own reality. This is where radical hermeneuts seem to disagree because the concept of subjectivity itself becomes problematic in their radical approach to questioning the presence of being. Even Husserl himself, who according to Derrida belongs to this radical group for his contention of phenomenological explication of lived experience, came under attack for his reliance on transcendental reflection and traditional metaphysics of subjectivity (Caputo, 1987, p. 4). Freire's praxis begins by throwing radical questions against our history and tradition which shapes our present being. But he does not agree that mere awareness of our temporality and of our inescapable connection to history for what we are now, is enough for us to be critically conscious. This requires that we also become aware "of our reality as being capable of transformation through our action in collaboration with others" (Peters, & Lankshear, 1990, p. 132).

In Ricoeur's point of view a complementarity between Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics and Freire's critical hermeneutics could be reached provided we adopt the

dialectical hermeneutics that he proposed. Freire's claim—that the moment humans cease to be objects of historical processes they set the stage to become more fully human—might, in Gadamer's view, be too demanding and unrealistic because, as he contended, we belong to history but not the other way round. If we were to objectify history in order to become a subject of history we, according to Gadamer, are complying with the Romanticists' philosophy. For Gadamer, we must acknowledge the historical reality and that because of this reality we have inevitably become what we are. As a human being one cannot absolutely distanciate him or herself from history for the sake of becoming "critically conscious" as much as he or she could not change history. Even by being aware of one's present (oppressed) condition it may not be possible for one to get involved in the kind of action Freire proposed which basically is a radical approach to shaping the future to make life more fully human.

Gadamer focused on the inevitable constitution of prejudices among human beings and considered prejudices as not being necessarily negative. He stressed accepting them and being open. Such an openness of human attitude facilitates humans' coexistence or mutual being-in-the-world of full of possibilities. Freire, on the other hand, necessitated the need to critically examine history and our prejudices. He believed in the creation of a history acceptable to noble human life and stressed bringing about changes in society through praxis as opposed to wait "patiently" for such changes to occur.

Although both Gadamer and Freire seem to agree on the need to critically understand history, they differ in their approach to transforming the world. Freire was explicit that we must reject outright history that has an oppressive tradition and only through our critical consciousness and praxis can we re-make the history. But Gadamer cautioned us from becoming rejecters of history. Instead, we have to understand it with an understanding of our own prejudices. He seemed to struggle hard against being trapped into the "good-bad" dichotomy of our existence or our being. He, unlike Freire, was careful to prescribe a method that will help humans to become more fully human.

The importance of considering the factors—critical understanding of history, and the need for humans to become more fully human—common to the philosophies of these two thinkers however, was implicit in Ricoeur's dialectical hermeneutics. It essentially played a role to mediate between Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics and Freire's critical hermeneutics.

Aoki's interest in hermeneutics and curriculum allowed us to understand curriculum from technical, situational, and critical inquiry orientations. He made it clear that educators' understanding of their task of educating others is grounded in multiple human interests. It is this recognition of the multiple human interests that became a philosophical

foundation upon which he constructed narratives of teaching from his loving and caring attention to the stories told by the practicing teachers with whom he came into contact.

It has now become evident that we can hear discourses of hermeneutics in at least five different voices. Radical hermeneutics seeks to restore life to its original difficulty. Philosophical hermeneutics emphasized a "fusion of horizon" acknowledging that "we always stand in a tradition; it is always part of us" (Peters, & Lankshear, 1990, p. 134). Critical hermeneutics emphasized a "liberatory praxis" in order to change society wherein humans become subjects of history. Dialectical hermeneutics takes a more modest path by emphasizing a dialectical relationship between explanation and understanding, and that between participation and distanciation. Phenomenological hermeneutics allows us to hear polyphonic voices of practitioners. Although, each of these voices seems to have different approaches to interpreting and understanding reality, there is a common thread that binds them together. Each starts with a fundamental question about our Being. Each is deeply concerned with the technological domination and instrumentality in understanding human sciences. The human aspect of our Being is what is fundamentally emphasized in each of these approaches.

Implications of Hermeneutic Insights for Inquiring into the Meaning of Distance Teacher Education

At various points, in the process of writing this chapter and getting acquainted with different routes to understanding hermeneutics, I was confronted by flashes of questions related to the way I had interpreted and understood some of the texts that represented the curriculum of distance-teacher-education in the Nepalese context. The most frequently recurring questions were: Did the task of text interpretation ever involve "self-understanding?" Did the inquiry into the text involve any attempt to understand human subjects who already have lived certain kind of lives? Did it even try to search for lived meaning of the text? Did it ever try to understand a particular instance of the text in relation to the whole? These questions which came to mind not just for the sake of asking questions gave me some sense that I am beginning to learn to ask questions.

In this sense, my re-search can be viewed as the "repetition" of my past inquiries into the curriculum of distance teacher education with a renewed experience of asking questions. However, I am trying not to use the term "repetition" merely in its literal sense. My use of the term "repetition" does not merely refer, as Caputo (1987) in quoting Constantius made it clear, to the repetition of the same but I expect it to be "a creative production which pushes ahead, which produces as it repeats, which produces what it

repeats, *which makes a life for itself in the midst of the difficulties of the flux*" (p. 3, emphasis added).

While hermeneutic insights provided me with new ideas for critical questions to inquire into the Nepalese educational phenomenon, it also guided my re-search to stay away from those approaches of inquiry into education which merely simplify and seek right answer(s) to tackling serious educational "problems." Understanding the existential realities of practicing primary teachers is central in my study. Such an understanding would be trivial and easily perceived in methodical and instrumentalists' approaches to inquiry in education. Such approaches basically focus on how to provide method(s) that would help people overcome perceived and quantified educational problems. But my study has neither sought to devise any such methods nor has it considered that understanding educational phenomenon is an easy task. In fact, the initial ground to approach the problem of understanding in my study is provided by Caputo's (1987) formulation of radical hermeneutics. This study began with an idea that in order to be sincerely involved in the task of understanding it is necessary to "restore life to its original difficulty" (Caputo, 1987, p. 1). By making such a start, however, I did not intend to remain radical and be dragged into a deep abyss from where it would be difficult to come out.

The insight into Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics made me cautious of such an abyss. The opening that Gadamer created in his hermeneutics for tradition and authority informs this study and hopefully the research process has been prevented from falling into historical regression. Understanding teachers' existential reality also meant a self-understanding for me because, following Gadamer's contention, my quest for searching for meaning has acknowledged in a positive way the inevitable presence of every individual's prejudices.

Similarly, following Ricoeur, it is acknowledged in this inquiry that the process of "understanding" human experiences, which is different from that of conceptualizing the natural phenomenon through scientific explanation, involves explanation and objectification prior to be able to participate in the world of meanings disclosed in the process. The real events which are the basis of the experiences that an individual lives with cannot be understood in the real sense. Rather, as Ricoeur (1981) asserts, understanding occurs at a different level. For example, a story told by an individual about his or her experiences becomes a text which gets objectified by the listener before he or she interprets, understands, and finds it relevant for him or her.

> There is no transfer from one region of reality to another—let us say, from the sphere of facts to the sphere of signs. It is within the same sphere of signs that the process of objectification takes place and gives rise to explanatory procedures. (Ricoeur, 1981, p. 328)

When Ricoeur included explanation in the task of text interpretation he seemed to mean that it was an attempt to distanciate the interpreter from the text and in so doing the interpreter becomes an actor of the text and thereby participates in the events disclosed by the text. Both participation and distanciation take place simultaneously during text interpretation. Such an activity does not obscure but rather enhances understanding. The significance of explanation becomes evident in my research especially when, as I had anticipated, the text of teachers' stories was difficult to comprehend. In such instances I had to distanciate and try to explain the text to myself to come to an understanding and find appropriate meanings. This act of distanciation also fulfills one of Gadamer's conditions of understanding. To understand and then to acknowledge the prejudices of others one has to distanciate from, as much as he or she has to participate in, the text. Then only we can be optimistic that a mutual co-existence in the text is possible even with the presence of differences among ourselves. This sense of distanciation along with participation was considered in this study.

Freire's approach to getting involved in dialogical interactions with others made sense to me in carrying out this research among the rural primary teachers of Nepal. The "problem posing education" that he advocated provided me with an idea to mutually get involved with Nepalese teachers in problematizing their view of teaching and about the methods and techniques of teaching they learned in the radio-based BTT program. However, I was conscious to be careful not to probe them to the extent that Freire would have done. It was not my expectation that the participants become "critically conscious" as the study did not anticipate their simultaneous action along with their "increased awareness" of reality so that they become instrumental in shaping their future. I am not sure whether my encounter with the participants had increased their level of awareness of their reality. In this sense, it was beyond the scope of my study that I involved them in "praxis." However, Freire's "problem posing" strategy and a sense of co-researchers, as emphasized in his problem posing education where students and teacher both are learners, was also of help in making meanings out of my encounters with the participants. The importance of hermeneutical reflection in one's effort to teaching, and researching for that matter, is expressed by Freire (1978) in the following quote:

> if the dichotomy between teaching and learning results in the refusal of the one who teaches to learn from the one being taught, it grows out of an ideology of domination. Those who are called to teach must first learn how to *continue* learning when they begin to teach. (Freire, 1978, p. 9, emphasis added)

Finally, Aoki's approach to understanding curriculum from technical, situational, and critical inquiry orientations provided me with a structure to organize my understanding of the meanings made by the participants.

Conversation as an Approach to Conducting the Research

An insight into hermeneutics enables us to understand the complexity of researching human perceptions about a particular phenomenon. However, in the process of developing this understanding one is also likely to lose the sense that after all, and in spite of our acknowledgement of the complexity to grasp a true understanding of the phenomenon, each of us is living in a world of our own constructs which, in one way or another, is "simplified" and structured. Although hermeneutically we always want to keep ourselves open in deciding appropriate methods of an inquiry process thereby giving less importance to structure, we are also constantly reminded by Ricoeur, as we reflect upon his concept of "distanciation," about the importance of some form of structure in order for us to be practical beings. Therefore, in view of this practical need I am required to provide some sort of structure in conducting this research. As a fulfillment of this requirement my research takes a conversation-approach as an appropriate structure. The field notes taken during the visits to the participants' lived contexts supplemented the conversation process in, for example, unfolding new topics and clarifying those already identified.

Since conversation is the main basis for conducting the research in this study it is natural for the reader to be concerned as to how a conversation is held. As implicit in Gadamer's (1984) hermeneutical discourse, the concern for sensitive and ethical conversation with others has informed my research. It takes the stance that the validity of such an approach depends upon how a sense of mutual trust is developed between the "researcher" and the participants. I personally find it important to consciously reflect upon the way the researcher deals with the participants so that he or she ensures ethical, sensitive, and thoughtful relationships with them.

"Trust" is a key term in this research and is something I as a researcher must try to establish with the participants. It is essential that the participants trust me as much as I trust them. However, the business of trusting each other is very personal. No matter how I explain the process perhaps it will not be possible for me to justify myself (to the level of readers' satisfaction) as having established a "trustful" relationship with the participants. Nevertheless, I am bound to try and establish such a relationship. An example of my attempt to establish this kind of mutual trust is included in Appendix B, which presents a sample of the conversational-inquiry-process that I and one of the participants have mutually engaged in as we constructed meanings of the radio-based BTT program.

Significance of a Conversation

> Conversation is related to questioning in the sense that participants in conversation are directed by a sense of openness, by something presently indeterminate which is worthwhile talking about. (Carson, 1984, p. 63)

Carson (1984) highlights the questioning aspect of conversation which is essentially crucial in terms of experiencing and understanding. It is necessary to ask questions if one wishes to understand what others have experienced in the world. But my research takes a stance that in a process of inquiry into human experiences and understanding the questioning does not necessarily have to be guided by a set of well structured and pre-tested questions because the research is informed by Gadamer's concept of openness. Gadamer (1993) contends that a true question is not something that can be formulated in advance. "Questioning . . . is more a passion than an action. A question presses itself on us" (Gadamer, 1993, p.366). Questions which have emerged during the course of a conversation make much more sense in developing the understanding. "The essence of *question* is to open up possibilities and keep them open " (Gadamer, 1993, p. 299).

Conversation, therefore, is an approach that takes the inquiry process beyond the point where technical research using structured and pilot-tested tools closes off its process. It feels that the power of conversation is profound, especially when it comes to making sense of others' perception. The beauty of conversation lies in its natural capacity to let different topics emerge and flow whereby the partners get immersed, not only intellectually but also emotionally, as the topics unfold. Questioning then becomes spontaneous vis-a-vis a contextualized process. Questions are formed within the course of the conversation seeking and/or providing a greater degree of clarity to the topics that the conversants have discovered.

> The topic, and the world to which the topic belongs, are held in common by the conversants, but the question arrives during the course of the conversation, in Gadamer's words it "presses itself upon us" as the negativity of experience counters preconceived opinion. (Carson, 1984, p. 63).

In the present point in time the most commonly held communication between two human beings, or that among individuals in a group, is mediated by conversations. It cannot be denied that the partners involved in a conversation are in a process of sustaining humanity in a commonly held world. As beings of a conversational world it will be extremely difficult for us even to imagine any other world where no one speaks to any one else yet it does not cease to be a humane world. Humans are making sense of their being largely because they can relate to each other through conversation. It allows us to

acknowledge the differences among human beings and at the same time provides a process to sustain our existence. It is because of such a nature of conversation that Carson (1984), following Oakeshott (1959), contends that "conversation is the appropriate image of human intercourse" (p. 64).

While a conversation can be a process of understanding the diversities inherent in humans' beingness (Oakeshott, 1959) it also provides the conversants with a common ground to make sense of who they are and why it is necessary for them to live a more human life. According to Gadamer (1984) participants engaged in a genuine conversation do not tend to talk with a mere self-interest but rather they allow themselves to be conducted by their mutual concern towards "the subject matter that is placed before them" (p. 378). This aspect of conversation is of particular interest to me in carrying out my research because my study is propelled by an underlying intent of inquiring into the problems of the Nepalese educational system in making education more human for the rural Nepalese children. This intent, which most likely intrigues any educator, conditions my conversations with the participants. The conversation, therefore, is directed by the conversants' mutual concern on the issues related to the problem of improving schools for the better education of children. In other words, although the study is about the experiences in the radio-based BTT program, the subtle question, "how do we as educators make learning at schools more human for children?," provides me and the individual participants the common ground to make sense of our conversation. Therefore, the topics developed in the conversation are in one way or another related to our mutual interest in the question.

A direct conversation does not necessarily prevent the participants from developing a distorted and one-sided picture of understanding about the meaning, in this case, of the participation in a teacher education program mediated through radio. However, the participants engaged in the conversation can avoid such type of misunderstanding by being hermeneutically reflective upon the topics of conversation. In order to develop a better understanding of what is said the individuals engaged in the conversation are reminded by hermeneutics to be interpretive. The hermeneutical interpretation of what is said in the conversation bridges "the gap between the familiar world in which [the partners] stand and the strange meaning that resists assimilation into the horizons of [their] world" (Linge, 1977, p. xii). My research takes into account this significance of hermeneutical interpretation.

Conducting the Research

While engaging in my research activities I was mindful of Gadamer's hermeneutical priority of question over answer and always tried to be cautious of the extent of "openness" that was present in my conversational approach to understanding the participants' lived worlds and their relationships with the BTT program. Ensuring hermeneutical reflections could therefore be considered as the guiding principle in my research. Following this principle I remained open through all my conversations with each of the participants and tried my best to allow, as Gadamer says, "genuine" conversations to take place. I tried to hold on to Gadamer's (1993) conviction that "a genuine conversation is never the one that we wanted to conduct. Rather, it is generally more correct to say that we fall into conversation, or even that we become involved in it" (p.383).

By maintaining a strategy of "openness" I had been able to realize this condition of "falling in" or "becoming involved in" in my conversations with the participants. Because of the openness inherent in the conversations the participants were finding it very comfortable to talk about their situational practices and relate them to my research interest.

Openness could force one to think that the conversations were without focus and arbitrary. But in my research the strategy did not lead me and the participants to carry out mere arbitrary conversations without focusing on the research question. The centrality of my research interest was maintained through the hermeneutical return to the key question. While, at a broader level, the conversations had a firm relationship to our mutual concern over the question related to the problems of creating an improved educational environment in and around the school, at a more specific level they were focussed to inquire as to where the radio-based BTT program stood amidst the overall situation of the participants.

The overall research process included several stages ranging from the initial stage involving the process of constant reflection of my past experiences; to the second stage of development of the theoretical concept guiding the general approach to conducting the research in the living context of the Nepalese teachers and educators involved in development and/or implementation of the radio-based BTT program; to the third stage of situating myself in this context; and finally to the latter stage of coming back to the University of Alberta and continuing a further analysis and interpretation of the research experiences with the help of available expertise and resources. Chapter I through the preceding section of this chapter reflects the stages one and two. The third stage depicting the specific research process in Nepal will be explained in the following section of this chapter. The forth stage of hermeneutic interpretations of the participants' meaning and their educational implications will be reflected in the final two chapters of this dissertation.

As I have mentioned in Chapter I, the research in Nepal was conducted with the help of eight participants who were directly related to the radio-based BTT program. Information about the implementation of the overall radio-based BTT program and about its participants was obtained from the program's central office at Sano Thimi, Bhaktapoor. A list of the participants of the current radio-based BTT program, their corresponding schools and the Resource Teachers was made available to me at the RETT office. One of the staff of this office, who became the eighth participant in my research, also spent some of his time with me explaining the present status of the program. The information shared by him, and that available in the office files, was extremely helpful for me to organize my successive tasks. It allowed me to locate two districts where the 1992/93 session of the radio-based BTT program had started less than a month ago and where the 1991/92 session had also been conducted. These two districts were chosen primarily by their location and accessibility to the researcher.

I visited two schools in the closest district and met one teacher in each school who were among the participants in the previous (1991/92) session of the radio-based BTT program. Both showed interest in participating in my research. While their participation allowed me to start my research immediately, I continued visiting other schools searching for two more teachers who were participating in the current session, and two resource teachers. It did not take me too long to find one of the two resource teachers. When I met him at his school I explained my project. He too showed his interest in participating in the research. In order to select the rest of the participants I travelled across a stretch of rough country road by motorbike to the second district. However, it was impossible to find a school with a teacher enrolled in the radio-based BTT program in that district. From a practical point of view, I had to forgo the idea of involving teachers from this district as they were all located in remote areas. When I first visited the resource class of the current session (1992/93) being organized in one of the secondary schools of the first district, I came into contact with two other classroom teachers and a second resource teacher who volunteered to participate in my research as my remaining participants, making a total of 6 teachers, 3 in each session.

Two more participants selected for this research are related to the overall activities of the radio-based BTT program. One of them was a consultant/evaluator of the RETT project with whom I had worked in the project itself during 1985-87 conducting a preliminary survey of the potential participants of the program. Currently, he is a full-time professor at the Faculty of Education of the Tribhuvan University and is no longer associate with the radio-based BTT program. The second participant, a RETT office staff member, was selected for his long time association with the program, particularly in the

area of program production. He presently holds a position of authority in the administrative structure of the RETT institution.

I had one prolonged conversation with the RETT staff member as the decision to seek his participation was reached only towards the final stage of my field research. The conversation lasted about one and one-half hour and was tape-recorded. I became particularly interested to talk to him about some of the issues raised by the participants. With each of the remaining participants I conducted a series of about four conversations of 15 minutes to as long as 2 hours. Approximately three successive conversations with each, all of which were tape-recorded, specifically pursued discussions initiated by the semi-structured questions listed in Appendix A. The rest of my meetings, particularly with the four teachers, took the form of short conversations on particular topics related to the previous conversations and/or on some of the concerns I had about my understanding of their teaching practices. Such meetings were helpful for me to probe into the issues discussed in the previous conversations and develop further clarity and understanding.

The conversations, which were carried out at places of our mutual convenience, were conducted during a four month period between November 23, 1992 and March 13, 1993. I was involved in the following activities during the four month period.

1. Initiated the first conversation with each participant.
2. Transcribed the audio-tapes of the conversations.
3. Prepared summaries of each conversation highlighting the topics.
4. Allowed the participants to reflect upon the summaries of the conversations.
5. Initiated second conversations and developed further clarity on the topics.
6. Visited schools, communities, and homes of the four primary teachers.
7. Listened to the audio-tapes of the second conversations and took notes of the points related to the topics developed in the first conversations.
8. Conducted the final conversations in reference to the previous ones and developed further clarity of the topics that helped me to come up with various themes.
9. Attended the resource classes to explore the relationship between what was said by the participants and what took place in the resource classes.
10. Reflected on all the above activities with the help of a personal journal and field notes.

Summary

In this chapter I tried to establish that not only was my research designed to meet the principles of hermeneutics, but also was intended to take an evaluative approach fulfilling some of the features of illuminative evaluations as proposed by Parlett (1991). I

tried to make it clear that unlike the way the formative and summative evaluations were conducted in the radio-based BTT program, I chose to take an interpretive approach whereby I collected information through repeated conversations with the participants along with my other experiences of "being" with them. An insight into the development of modern hermeneutics provided me with the guiding principles to *be* with them and conduct the research.

In the course of developing insights into the educational nature of hermeneutic inquiry, I became involved in an extensive analysis of hermeneutical discourses of some of the prominent thinkers of the field. A major portion of this chapter has been devoted in presenting what I understand about hermeneutics and how it has been used in my research. I was convinced that my attempt to develop insights into the field of hermeneutics has helped me enrich my research approach. I made sure that I adhered to some of the crucial aspects of hermeneutics while designing and conducting my research. As advocated by Heidegger, the concept of "Being" and the necessity of going back to the fundamental question of "Being" in the process of understanding, has been acknowledged in my research. Gadamer provided me with the concepts of self criticism, fusion of horizon, and the acknowledgement of presence of prejudices among every human being, which helped me find a "place" among the lived contexts of the practicing participants as I approached them to conduct my research. While appreciating Freire's provocative technique of questioning the tradition that shaped our reality, Ricoeur reminded me of the danger of such a technique if I were to ignore being sensitive, as Gadamer wants us to be, to the tradition. However, the problem-posing strategy that Freire suggested was of use in probing into some of the issues that came up in my conversations with the participants. Aoki's identification of technical, situational, and critical inquiry orientations allowed me to understand participants' meanings from the perspective of these orientations.

In the later part of this chapter I tried to present how conversations can be used by the researcher and participants to be engaged in hermeneutical interpretation of meanings disclosed during the research process. It is my conviction that the mere use of a "pre-tested-well-structured-instrument" might be useful for collecting "opinion" of practitioners involved in a situational practice but use of such an instrument alone cannot be very helpful for the researcher and/or the evaluator to come up with an "illuminative" understanding of what it is like for the practitioners to be involved in the situational practice. By being engaged in repeated conversations with the practitioners and allowing appropriate questions to form, re-form, guide, and provide a continuation to the conversations, the researcher or the evaluator can come up with more illuminative and meaningful interpretations about the practitioners' experiences.

Guided by this principle and with some form of understanding about hermeneutics, I proceeded to Nepal to pursue my research endeavors. In the final section of this chapter I have made an attempt to present how I ensured the hermeneutic and interpretive approach to conducting my research in Nepal. I tried to be explicit of the limitations of the conversations I had with the participants to ensure "trust" in my relationships with them. The complexity of defining and establishing "trusting" relationships with the participants was acknowledged in my presentation. Whether I established such relationships is a judgement left in the hands of the reader as I found the definition of the term "trust" vague and one that could take different forms depending upon individual perceptions. However, my claim was that I made the relationships as trusting as possible by attempting to put into practice my understanding of some aspects of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics—e.g., the requirements on the part of me to act with "openness," and be "responsive" and "sensitive" towards others' prejudices. Such a practice has been continued in the process of understanding the participants' meaning of their involvement in the distance teacher education program presented in the following chapter.

Chapter III

THE MEANINGS DISCLOSED IN THE CONVERSATIONS WITH THE PARTICIPANTS

Introduction

I mentioned in Chapter II that in the course of listening and transcribing the conversation audio-tapes, and reading and re-reading the transcripts, a greater clarity was reached about the topics of conversation. An additional clarity was reached as I translated the Nepali transcripts of the conversation text into English which allowed my academic advisor and other English speaking colleagues to be able to read and develop some sense out of the "data." The whole process eventually helped me to come up with themes.

The themes that emerged had a general pattern which, as discussed in the previous chapter, can be understood from the three perspectives that Aoki (1984) has identified as possible categories that a process of curriculum evaluation can fall into: technical or end-means evaluation orientation, situational interpretive evaluation orientation, and critical evaluation orientation.

The three evaluation or inquiry orientations were used by Werner (1984) as the basis of "sense making" of different school programs and the approaches taken to implement the programs. As my research is primarily concerned with the meanings that the participants have made from their participation in the radio-based Basic Teacher Training (BTT), I have found Werner's (1984) approach to "sense-making of school programs" helpful to understand the relationships between the themes that emerged and the assumptions underlying the program.

The Tylerian concern about what a curriculum should look like is dominant in the development of the radio-based BTT program. Following the Tyler rationale, specific objectives, selection of the content that supported attaining the objectives, organization of the content, and evaluation to determine the extent to which the objectives are taken care of are the sequentially arranged elements of the program. The end-means or the technical orientation was, therefore, of primary concern of the program in all its efforts to develop activities, evaluate them and subsequently "improve" the program. In the following section of this chapter I have attempted to unfold some of the specific underlying assumptions of the radio-based BTT program and how they relate to the different understandings made by the individuals involved in the program. I have arranged my interpretations of the emerging themes according to technical, situational, and critical inquiry orientations.

My analysis and interpretation of the participants' experiences of the radio-based BTT program is preceded by a brief background on each of them so that the reader will be

able to conceptualize the context in which my research was conducted. For the purpose of maintaining anonymity and protecting participants from any negative consequence I have used pseudonyms for each of them and the schools where they were working.

Meaning of the Radio-based BTT Program for the Primary Teachers who Participated in the 1991/92 Session

Teacher Yog

His Background

Yog had been teaching at the Southern (proposed) Lower Secondary School[1] for the last seven years. The school was within walking distance from his house. After finishing secondary school in 1983 he spent three years at home engaged in household chores and farming. In 1986 he took up a teaching position without any training. He became a trained primary teacher only after going through the radio-based BTT program in 1992.

Yog was living in an extended family with his father, mother, his ill uncle, younger brother and his wife, and his own wife and two children. The family's main source of income was farming. Yog, therefore, had a much broader responsibility that extended beyond his teaching responsibility to the extensive farming and household activities.

Yog was trying hard to pass the Certificate[2] level examination in the field of humanities and social sciences. He was facing the problem of passing English in which he

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[1]A primary school consists of five grades (grades 1 through 5) while a lower secondary school includes sixth and seventh grades, and a secondary school includes eighth, ninth and tenth grades.

Once the District Education Office (DEO) receives a primary school's proposal to convert the school to lower secondary level it may get the permission from the DEO to run grades 6 and 7. With this permission the school gets a status of *proposed* lower secondary school but for at least three years it cannot demand any additional financial support from the DEO. The school is not recognized as a full-fledged lower secondary school unless the DEO approves the proposal and takes over all the financial responsibilities of the lower secondary grades. Typically, it takes as long as 7 to 8 years for a proposal to be approved. There are number of factors that influence the DEO's decision in this regard. The prominent ones being availability of funds, commitment and capabilities of the people proposing the school, and the extent to which the proposal stimulates the political interests of the local and central politicians. The same process holds for a lower secondary school proposing to become a secondary school.

[2]A two year academic course after passing the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) examination. SLC is equivalent to tenth grade.

had already taken tests in each of the past three years. He was going to take the test this year too.

R. What have you been studying now?

Y. I am in the Certificate Level Arts. Have a back-paper to clear in English. I will then be getting my degree [Certificate level is equivalent to grade 11 and 12 in the North American tradition]. . . . I already took the exam three times. [This year] its going to be the fourth time.

R. Only in English?

Y. Yes.

R. Is English difficult?

Y. I found it difficult. I didn't have a good foundation. And because of that I have been scoring only 20-22, 25-26% [40% is the pass mark]. (Conversation on November 24, 1992).

In Yog's school there were seven grades with a total of 548 students. Because of the large number of students, the lower grades (grades 1, 2 and 3) were divided into two sections of about 50 to 60 children in each. But the number of teachers employed in the school did not match the number of classes. In other words, the nine teachers working in the school were not enough for conducting all the classes. The school, being a proposed lower secondary school, was not entitled to receive government funds for teachers' salaries in lower secondary grades (grades 6 and 7). The salary of one of the nine teachers was, therefore, borne by money raised through the tuition fees of grade 6 and 7 students (according to the Education Act students in primary level cannot be charged tuition fees in public schools). Because of a lack of funding the school was not in a position to employ any more teachers. So, the teachers working in this school had to carry a heavy teaching load.

When I had the first conversation with Yog it had been a little more than a year after he had completed the program. His responses to my questions, therefore, involved frequent recalling of year old memories. In our conversations we tried to establish a relationship between his present experiences and his participation vis-a-vis the knowledge of teaching that he learned in the program.

Teacher Chandan

Her Background

Chandan is one of the six teachers of the Western Lower Secondary School situated at a semi-urban location about 26 kilometers away from the city of Kathmandu. She joined

the profession after passing the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) examination in 1982. She has recently passed the Bachelor of Commerce examination. The school, which is located on one side of the main highway connecting to Kathmandu, was about one and one-half kilometers from Chandan's house.

Chandan did not go through any formal teacher education program prior to joining the profession except the 200-mark education course[3] she took while she was in grades nine and ten. For the first time in her career the radio-based BTT program provided her with formal training for instruction in the primary curriculum as she was beginning her seventh year teaching at the present school.

Chandan's school had an unequal distribution of teachers, students and classes. It had seven grades but only six teachers. There was, therefore, at least one grade without a teacher all the time as each grade had a separate class. Because of the proportion of teachers to classes the official work load for each of the teachers was quite heavy (although they did not have to deal with large numbers of students inside the classrooms). Officially, each teacher was supposed to teach at least all seven periods every day. Occasionally, the teachers were also required to control two separate classrooms simultaneously. During one of my visits to the school I found Chandan frequently moving in and out of two classes in a class period of 45 minutes.

While the ratio of teachers to classes was high, the ratio of students to teacher, especially in grades 3 to 7, was low. In my two successive observations in grades 4 and 5 of Chandan's classes I found that there were only 13 and 8 students respectively. Commenting on such a small number of students the headmaster told me that it was common for children in this school to drop out as they reached higher grades. Besides,

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[3]Prior 1982, in general public schools students could start taking education as an optional course under the vocational subjects in grade eight which could be continued to grade ten in their respective secondary schools. The course used to be called the 200-mark education course. The 200-mark meant that a student could score a full mark of 200 in the SLC (School Leaving Certificate) examination. In a vocational school students could choose an education course carrying either 300 or 400 marks. After the curriculum change in 1982, the marks in the vocational subjects have been reduced to a maximum of 100. As well, the vocational-school-concept has been canceled.

There are several combinations of different subjects that a student could choose from in order to complete the SLC level. In each combination the total mark adds up to 1000. A student is considered to be successful only if he or she scores a minimum of 30% of the full marks in each course (or subject). If he or she passed all the subjects and his or her total score in all subjects makes up 45 to 59% of the total of 1000 marks then he or she will be placed as pass with a second division. Similarly 60% and above is known as first division.

there were two more schools where the local children could go as these schools were also within walking distance from their community. One of the two schools was privately run and was located just across the road; the other one was a public lower secondary school located at a distance of less than 2 kilometers.

Besides teaching Chandan also had some other personal responsibilities, for example, cooking meals, washing dishes and clothes, and cleaning. As she was not married Chandan had no children of her own to be worried about but she had a responsibility towards other family members. All these responsibilities prevented her from pursuing graduate studies after she completed a Bachelor's degree in Commerce. She expressed her sense of helplessness like this:

> C. Recently I passed B. Com.(Bachelor of Commerce). I wanted to study for the M. Com. (Master's Degree in Commerce) but didn't get a chance. I was not granted a study leave. Besides, my elder brother has his job. (Conversation on November 23, 1992).

Chandan was interested in continuing her studies in the field of education soon after she passed the SLC But, since the local campus did not offer education courses she had only two options, either to go to Kathmandu or to take a different route to higher education. She could not afford the option of going to Kathmandu

> C. The campus nearby didn't have any program other than degrees in Arts and Commerce. If I were to study education I would have to go all the way to Kathmandu. (Conversation on November 23, 1992).

Meaning of Participation in the Radio-based BTT Program

My analysis and interpretation of Yog and Chandan's meaning of participation in the program is presented as concerns expressed as interests in the technical, situational, and critical analytic orientations (Aoki, 1984; Jacknicke & Rowell, 1987).

The Meaning Related to Technical Concerns

Both Yog and Chandan were teaching amidst an environment with numerous problems which were complex to understand and tackle with the "limited" knowledge they had accumulated from various means, one of which was the radio-based BTT program. As I have mentioned earlier, the problems perceived were subject mostly to technical solutions. The technical aspect emphasized in the program had some significant impact over Chandan and Yog's perception about teaching. The participation in and the "successful" completion of the radio program last year labeled them as trained primary teachers. Basically, the label "trained teacher" indicates that they have acquired some basic techniques of teaching. But, what does it mean for them to be technically competent? How did they see the technical

aspect of the program? Our conversations about the topics related to this aspect allowed me to come up with the following themes.

Theme one: Being aware of techniques was helpful for teaching. At various points in my conversations with Yog and Chandan, we had discussed the foundations and principles upon which the content and method of the radio-based BTT program and the resource classes were developed and implemented. We were convinced that the program allowed its participants to become acquainted with several basic skills and techniques of teaching. How did they benefit from the training program? They had the following things to say.

> Y. The training has been fruitful for me and my students. Because, prior to being trained I did not know the techniques of teaching. Being aware of these techniques is an advantage. . . . If we want to teach, for example, a concept that the earth is round, then we can present numerous examples, by drawing on the blackboard, or by presenting the shape, etc. (Conversation on November 24, 1992)

> C. In the beginning teaching used to be difficult. But once I took the training it was no longer difficult to teach. Actually, as soon as you entered the classroom you know how to teach, where to start, and how to attract children's attention. All these techniques were not clear to me [prior to taking the training]. Teaching after training was better. In order to conduct the class successfully I ought to know how to attract the students to the lesson they are going to learn and how to help them develop interest in that lesson. (Conversation on November 23, 1992)

Yog and Chandan, prior to being exposed to the techniques of teaching, had to carry out all their instructional activities relying mostly on some faded memories of how a "good" teacher used to teach them during their school days. Therefore, both Yog and Chandan thought that it was certainly better to have training than to continue teaching without it. For the first time, the program had provided them with an opportunity to realize the theory of classroom-teaching. It made them "familiar" with the terms like lesson plan, instructional objective, classroom management, instructional material, and evaluation. In pointing out the merits of the training program Chandan says:

> C. Since I did not go through any teacher education program prior to joining the profession I used to feel confused in the classroom. It's only after taking the radio training that I came to know about what one must do prior to going into the classroom, how one must be prepared. (Conversation on November 23, 1992).

Similarly, Yog makes the following points about the importance of the training program:

> Y. I was teaching somehow and I knew that my teachings were not effective. Now, I feel that my techniques of teaching have improved since I took the training. . . . I learned how to develop instructional materials and how to use them for better student understanding in particular lessons. I also learned how to assist students in their co-curricular activities and how to encourage them to develop interests in those activities. And something about how evaluation is done. (Conversation on November 24, 1992)

The perspective dominating the field of teacher education, however technical it may be, has not been formed arbitrarily. It has evolved with the studies and experiences of people involved in the field. Almost all teacher education programs, in one way or another, take advantage of the body of knowledge developed under the influence of the technical orientation. The radio-based BTT program is also influenced by this body of knowledge. Therefore, at least from the point of view of accessing the broadly used language of teacher education, Yog and Chandan found it useful to have participated in the program. The training provided a platform for them to mix with a group of other teachers where some form of critical discussions, for example technique versus reality, were bound to take place.

By being involved in such a process Yog and Chandan were in a position to be able to make connections between their own teaching context and the appropriateness of different strategies mentioned in the techniques of teaching. Yog's attempt to make such a connection was intriguing.

> Y. The program emphasized that teaching should be conducted making use of locally available material in developing teaching aids. I like that. As for example, if you needed a map the training does not expect you to put all your effort to find it in the market and buy it. It tells us that such maps can be made by teachers themselves with whatever limited materials available to them. In fact, it encourages that teachers make use of materials developed by themselves. I agree with this. (Conversation on November 24, 1992)

As a means of distance learning the radio-based BTT program had its limitations. It was not possible for the program to consider specific teaching experiences of teachers like Yog in its radio lessons. However, the topic on different techniques of teaching included in the total package of the program, supplemented by occasional interactions in the resource classes, proved to be useful for Yog and Chandan. The opportunity to get-together in the resource classes had allowed teachers to be involved in discussions on issues related to the constraint of applying techniques in practice. Such discussions allowed Yog and Chandan to develop an understanding of the possible contradictions between theory and practice. Such an understanding provided an avenue for them to see possibilities in the profession. Unfortunately, the discussions leading to such an understanding was confined to the

training only and, for both Yog and Chandan, it had never been an integral part of their teaching.

Learning techniques of teaching is like being able to, as Ricoeur (1981) says, "distanciate" from the instructional problems which are essential to become a better teacher. Technique may also allow teachers to be comfortable in the classroom. Theoretically, knowledge about techniques should help teachers smooth the "ruptures" which appear during their teaching practices. However, good teaching is more than knowing the technique or being able to distanciate from problems. It is not enough for the teacher alone to feel comfortable but the extent to which children are "comfortable" in the classroom must also be understood and, if possible, ensured. The other aspect that Ricoeur (1981) stressed, "participation in the world unfolded in front of" the teacher, is equally important for him or her to be an "effective" teacher.

Theme two: Being influenced by the technical view of teaching. For Chandan and Yog, the participation in the program was the only formal opportunity they had to "learn" how to teach. Therefore, I found it reasonable when they frequently emphasized the importance of knowing some of the commonly used techniques of teaching which they were introduced to in the program. Although the techniques did not provide them with a complete set of new ideas, it was felt that they were helpful for them to develop some sort of confidence in their teaching practices.

Both Chandan and Yog indicated that their emphasis to learn basic techniques of teaching was related to the main purpose for which people send their children to school. They perceived that parents and school authorities were interested to see children "progressing" well in the subject content of the prescribed national curriculum. At school, children are expected to learn according to the prescribed curriculum which also is the emphasis of the radio-based BTT program. Its thrust, therefore, is to *train* teachers to become capable of delivering the curriculum "effectively." For this, the program provided teachers with the methods of developing appropriate lesson plans, materials to be used, a step-by-step description of the instructional activities during the entire period, and evaluation procedures to measure the extent to which the instructional objectives were achieved.

Helping children to cope with the prescribed curriculum was felt to be a difficulty by both Chandan and Yog. Although the problem still persists, they both felt that the exposure to the Tylerian technique of curriculum development helped them to be more rational and objective in carrying out their task of teaching. After all, in a typical case of evaluation of classroom teaching, a "good" teacher is characterized by the knowledge he or

she has about techniques and about the subject matter. So, Yog and Chandan were encouraged to have learned techniques which also helped them "successfully" complete the BTT program conduced by the RETT project.

In my conversations with both Chandan and Yog we probed into the specific techniques they learned in the BTT program. I wanted to hear from them how children in the classroom took advantage of the techniques their teachers learned. Yog and Chandan's responses in this regard were not as specific as those regarding the skills they learned themselves. For example, in Chandan's case, her response was the following.

> C. The techniques helped a lot. It was very easy to teach after listening to the lessons broadcast in the radio.
>
> R. How did it help students too?
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> C. Well, for example, in the training you learned that you must prepare your lesson plan and also teaching materials. Teaching children using the lesson plan and teaching materials ensured a faster learning among the children. (Conversation on November 23, 1992).

Her responses were an indication of her being influenced by the technical view of teaching. She could only assume that the use of lesson plans and teaching materials would ensure faster student learning because as we probed into this topic in our subsequent conversations she admitted that she did not actually make use of any lesson plan in her teaching. The reason being that her daily teaching load is extremely heavy leaving her hardly any time to prepare the lesson plan or teaching material. However, even without the experiential or first hand knowledge she still thought that "if I could have developed and used lesson plans in my teachings, my teachings would certainly have been better" (Conversation on December 2, 1992). As we explored further into the topic she realized that there are other aspects of teaching that makes a teacher "a good teacher."

> C. The radio program broadcasts information about particular subjects and the method and skills needed to teach each subject. But besides the knowledge of the subject matter and technique of teaching, teachers also need to understand classroom setting. They should be able to establish humane relationships and good rapport with children. Then only can one be a good teacher. (Conversation on December 2, 1992).

Now, in Yog's case, although he remained cynical of various aspects of the program, he thought that the generic teaching skills discussed, which are typical of most of the primary teacher training programs, allowed him to see the weaknesses of his own teaching practices prior to participating in the program.

> Y. As I have already said it taught us how to develop instructional materials. Although before we used to develop materials, we did not know how to make a proper use of those materials. We ran into

problems while teaching. After training things became easier, for example, if I was to make a watch I knew the technique to make strong arms of the watch that could be rotated as well and could be used to teach the concepts of time.

R. Didn't you know how to make such a material before?

Y. Its not that I didn't know before but once you give time and become engaged specifically in learning the technique it does make a difference and you develop an insight into it. But without learning and being involved in such a process it would not be as easy to develop the materials and see their importance for teaching purposes. . . . You can conveniently teach if you have already learned some basic techniques. Without learning we can teach, but you will find it difficult.

R. Are you saying that as soon as you took the training your skill to make materials had improved?

Y. Yes, I was appraised with some basic techniques. That is what I think. . . . If you have learned something you feel like applying it frequently. I found it that way. (Conversation on November 24, 1992)

Implicit in Yog's response is the need for him to learn to appreciate the technical view of teaching. In order to be able to teach a curriculum given to him he should know the techniques that the curriculum developers had in mind. Curriculum is available in the form of a "blue-print." So, during the training teachers take it for granted and pursue the ways to effectively implement it which, as perceived in the Nepalese educational community, is not happening. In the radio-based BTT program the concern, therefore, is how teachers can be better prepared for this purpose. The purpose of the program is not to question *why* teaching is not effective and *what* the curriculum means to people. Rather, it has been implemented to endorse the technical and intervening characteristics of the educational system and proceed from there to help teachers develop skills to "effectively" carry out the job laid out for them. Yog and Chandan's interest to learn the technique has a relationship to this educational phenomenon.

The Meaning Related to Situational Concerns

It had been one year since Chandan and Yog took part in the BTT program when I first made contact with them. Their participation in my research, therefore, allowed me to inquire into the influence of the training on their situational practices over that period of time.

As convinced as they were about the technical knowledge they acquired in the program, it was difficult for them to see the significance of such knowledge in transferring it into their reality. Technically, both Chandan and Yog symbolized the "success" of the training program. But when we took a closer look at their post-training experiences of

teaching in their lived context the "cracks" inherent in the symbol became much more clear. In the end-means or technical evaluation orientation such "cracks" are often ignored. This forbidden aspect of evaluation has been illuminated to some extent in the following themes.

Theme three: Teaching in the lived context is more complex than how it is generally perceived in the training program. The teaching skills learned in the training program were not enough for both Chandan and Yog to be able to cope with the complex conditions in and around their respective schools. A "good" teaching-learning atmosphere, as sought by the program, could not be created in either Yog's or Chandan's classroom.

> Y. I agree that one of the key issues [for effective teaching] is a good school environment. Ideally, for example, in each class there should not be more than 30 children while we are compelled to conduct classes with 80 students. . . . Although according to the training program we were supposed to conduct classes with fewer children and make teaching more effective these things are not happening. . . . Practical difficulties are not considered in the objectives of the curriculum. What you practice is different from what objectives sought for. At times you simply forget the objectives and deal with the situation. (Conversation on November 24, 1992).

> C. In grade two alone there are 50 students. In the radio they probably have 10-12 children when they broadcast a classroom instruction. Here, you confront difficulties as you find yourself amidst 40-50 students. . . A large classroom is difficult to control. You never know in what mood the children will be. It is very hard to hold children's attention and help them develop interest in the lesson. Most of your time is spent on such activities and hardly any time is left for us to get going with the actual instruction. (Conversation on November 23, 1992).

> C. If students are not at all motivated to learn then it is useless for the teacher to try to teach. . . . I am aware of different strategies of teaching, for example small group teaching. But the classrooms are so small that grouping is impossible. (Conversation on March 12, 1993).

Both Chandan and Yog seem to be saying that reality is much more complex than how it is usually perceived in the course of learning how to teach through a training program like BTT. "You never know in what mood the children would be." It is hard to guarantee that any particular method of teaching "prescribed" in the training program is going to work there. In the training program real situations, for example the one that Yog explained to me that "some children start at 8 in the morning in order to be at the school by 10" (Conversation on November 24, 1992), become heedless. These children spend more

than ten hours everyday away from home in the name of the schooling. Most of them remain hungry, especially towards the later part of the day, because they can not afford to buy or bring adequate food from home. The headmaster of Chandan's school had mentioned that occasionally he was compelled to release children early either because they would say they were too hungry or because the weather was too cold. Yog, on the other hand, felt that there was nothing he could do when confronted with hungry children during classroom instruction. He also knew that

> most of the children come to school only after completing household-chores. And upon returning too they assist the parents in whatever manner possible. . . . Along with farming they also raise cattle, . . . look after younger siblings, cook meals, fetch water, all sorts of things. (Conversation on November 24, 1992).

During my visit to Yog's school on February 15, 1993 I had observed him teaching grade one. The first thing I noticed was the difficulty that the children had remaining in the room with no roof and furniture. While the sun overhead caused them to sweat, the dust on the floor made it hard to breathe. There were three sections of Grade One and Yog was required to teach all three sections simultaneously. In one section he would be present for about 15 minutes before moving on to another section. In his journal Yog wrote about his painfully challenging task of teaching such a classroom.

> Children were showing their usual characteristics; mischievous, [but] scared, timid, and docile. There were about 40 to 50 students who genuinely belonged to the class while the rest 10 to 15 were the younger siblings of the former. In order to avoid unnecessary disturbances at home, and also because there was no one at home to baby-sit them, those younger children were sent to school along with their brothers and sisters. For the parents, it was like *ek panth do kaj* (killing two birds with one stone).
>
> As I set out to teach, those small children began to cry and make noise. I somehow solved this problem but soon I noticed that some of the children had already torn their books while others were daydreaming not even opening the bags. Some children did not even have paper and pencil when I wanted them to write something. And when I wanted them to submit their home work some were saying "I didn't come yesterday. So I didn't know what I need to bring today." The whole period was spent trying to find the solutions to those problems. (From Yog's journal dated November 29, 1992).

The problems of teaching small children in this school would not be as easy to understand as any theory of pedagogy would categorize and describe. Knowing the technique of teaching was not sufficient for teachers like Yog. The presence of these problems in the school raises the question about the applicability of the teaching skills learned in the training program. In many instances Yog just did not care to remember the techniques taught in the training program and dealt with the situation on his own.

> Y. In principle we are required to have definite objectives of teaching. This is what we learned. But in practice we have to act according to the situation. (Conversation on November 24, 1992)

Yog's experiences of teaching children, although perhaps not of any interest to the developers of the radio training program, could be of great educational value for anyone who cared to learn about the problems of implementing the knowledge of teaching in a real situation.

Theme four: Lack of sensitivity towards the issues related to children's being. Learning could be profound if the learners/teachers get opportunities to share among each other the experiences of their practices. By sharing such experiences they can reflect upon and come up with critical questions about their own practices. Chandan and Yog's experiences, for example, of establishing relationships and being with children could have been an interesting topic to learn from in the radio-based BTT program for them as well for others involved in the program.

At various points in my conversations with Yog and Chandan they made references to their relationships with children in classrooms. Through his journal entry Yog expressed one specific instance of living with children of the fourth grade which pointed out a very critical pedagogical issue which is often ignored in most of the innovative programs. Part of his journal reads like this:

> The homework for the children was to answer the questions given at the end of a chapter in the text book. Along with those I asked them to write the answers of some other questions too. But, it was impossible for me to check everyone's work in a class of 70 pupils. However, in my random checking I noticed that some did good while others did not, many told lies and did not care to do the homework, and some said "I did not come yesterday so I was not aware of the assignment." . . . I had all six periods to teach without any break. So, I could hardly find time to check in detail all the homework and include comments in each. My inability to do so must have had a negative effect on the students who probably thought that "the teacher did not even bother to check the homework. So it does not really make any difference if you did your homework or not." There was such a negative consequence. So, it was like "being unable to decide about the pumpkin hanging at a difficult height as to whether make an effort to pick or to keep staring at it." By being a teacher in such a situation how can I contribute in raising the quality of education to an acceptable standard? How will the educational objectives and principles prepared by intellectuals and educators be accomplished? I became concerned as well as disturbed by all these issues. (From Yog's journal entry dated December 4, 1992)

How pedagogically sound are the relationships between Yog and his students? How does one understand the existing relationships? In the above quotation Yog clearly expressed his deep sense of helplessness as he continued an ethically conflicting teaching

practice in his classroom. As was also evident in other moments of our conversations Yog admitted that he could not establish a pedagogically sound relationship with children.

> Y. Let us look at our own problems. Children are cramped on the planks and you hear them complaining "I did not get place to sit; I am being pushed," etc. You spend most of the time comforting students as they keep fighting among each other. . . .No it was not possible to deal with them lovingly. What could I do? When I wasn't able to provide them with even such a basic thing like a desk what loving word do I utter for them? (Conversation on November 24, 1992).

Yog's story, however, calls for a sensitive consideration of everyone aspiring for a "good" teaching-learning atmosphere towards the pedagogical dilemma that he was in. Unfortunately, in Yog's comments it was clear that the radio training program did not constitute any activity that considered such experiences of teachers as a topic to learn from. The situation in which Yog was teaching was not of any concern in the training mechanism of the program but on the other hand Yog showed his concerns over the difficulties that the program developers had to face in implementing the program.

> Y. Human beings live in-between feelings and compulsions. Now [for a teacher] although he or she has an utmost feeling to teach as effectively as possible, because of unfavorable situations he or she may not be able to do so. The same might be true for the program developers. Their objectives might not have been practical. Objectives might have been developed on the basis of high ideals but in practice they might not work and our practice might not change so quickly as the objectives would demand. There are practical difficulties that are inevitable. (Conversation on November 24, 1992)

But, from the point of view of the basic philosophy of the radio-based BTT program, as in a typical teacher training program, it was wrong not to be able to develop lesson plans and the necessary teaching materials no matter how difficult it was for teachers to comply with such requirements. Therefore, the program's primary focus was to make the participants skilled in developing appropriate lesson plans and instructional materials. But the extent to which the skilled teachers were successful in establishing an expected classroom environment with a good relationships with students was not an issue to be discussed. According to Yog, a teacher would be considered competent if he or she "prepares effective and good lesson plans, uses every material needed, and makes students understand the subject-matter well" (Conversation on November 24, 1992). But the difficulties experienced by teachers in helping students understand well were hardly explored in the training program.

For example, Chandan told me that she never had any opportunity to talk about her teaching experiences with others. According to her I was the first person with whom she had ever had conversations which specifically explored her practices and that also

manifested some moments of reflection. In our conversation on February 16, 1993 she said she was glad that, for the first time, she had had the opportunity to express to someone about her teaching experiences and share her feelings. The opportunity of talking about her experiences was also a moment for her to be reflective on what usually went on in her classroom, and what sort of relationships did she have with children. Although in the first conversation she was talking with some degree of reservation, she was much more open in our final conversation and was critical of what had been happening in her relationships with children. The development of the mutual confidence between us was an interesting phenomenon which she did not experience with the researchers and evaluators of the radio-based BTT program. Unfortunately, as my research was restricted by a pre-set schedule, I had to discontinue this type of self-reflective conversations with her at what appeared to be a premature stage.

The pedagogical issues illuminated in Chandan's critical reflection on her teaching practices is exemplified in the following statement.

> C. I don't think that just because a teacher is competent in the subject matter he or she is also competent in teaching. I am facing the difficulty in making children understand what I teach. I came to know about the theories of teaching, which was the only focus of the training program. But I have not been able to apply them in practice. What am I suppose to do now? (Conversation on February 16, 1993).

So, were the children in Chandan's class learning what they should have learned? She threw the question back to me as I too had opportunities to see for myself what was going on at the school. She asked, what did I think? Although in answering the question I said something to her, my answer was of no significance compared to what the question itself explained to me about the situation. Innate in the question was a passionate call, directed to those trying to see improvements in her teaching practices, to have some sense of where and how she is living as a teacher. It calls for one to develop an understanding of and some degree of sensitivity towards why her relationships with the children were the way they were.

Although the personnel of the program expected teachers, upon their "successful" participation in the program, to be "competent" and "effective," the lived experiences were often ignored. It was not realized that if the issues related to teachers' experiences and reality were left out of the activities in the training program, then participation in the program would not make a great deal of sense to them. Yog too felt that an attempt to understand practitioners' lived context must accompany the desire of seeing improved practices.

> Y. What [the organizers of the program] should have done, I think, is that they should have studied and developed an insight into the practical realities before they made the program. I think, the implementation, then, would have been much better. . . . They, however, did not seem to have done an in-depth study of the reality while the program was developed, because there is a big gap between objectives of the program and our reality. The government on the other hand seems to have taken it for granted that schools would be well equipped to implement the curriculum it has prescribed. But because of our confrontation with the reality something else is taking place at the school. (Conversation on November 24, 1992)

One problem which Yog recurrently mentioned as being a major hindrance for "effective" teaching and attaining curricular objectives was that of teaching abnormally large sized classes. He realized that such a problem was not unique to his context. Many teachers had no other choice but learn to live with it. But what seemed to have disturbed him was that the problem was not considered seriously in the activities of the program. Acquainting teachers with other technical aspects of teaching was stressed so much that the problem arising from large class size was treated as if it never existed.

> Y. In my experience I didn't find much of arrangements made in this regard. Although, we were told to conduct classes with fewer children and make the teaching more effective these things are not happening. . . . In grade four I have to teach 80-82 students.
>
> R. Which is totally a different context than what is assumed in the . . .
>
> Y. That's what I am saying. Practical difficulties are not taken care of in the objectives [of the curriculum]. What you practice is different from what objectives sought for. At times you simply forget the objectives and deal with the situation. (Conversation on November 24, 1992)

Confronted with such practical difficulties Yog was bound to carry out his teaching practices without really making use of the technical skills learned in the training program. To some extent he was aware that by being such a teacher he was not doing justice to his students. They deserved to be treated more pedagogically and individually. But whatever practices took place in the classroom, both the teacher and students took them as the way of life. Unfortunately this mode of being in the classroom continued for Yog and his students without any opportunity for critical reflection so as to find some possibilities within that mode.

Some degree of sensitivity towards the lived context of teachers like Yog and Chandan and their pupils could perhaps have made the radio-based BTT program more significant. But if the attempt to understand practical problems is confined to objective approaches then the knower is likely to lose sense of the lived world. In the conversations which I had with both Chandan and Yog it is implicit that regular contacts and sharing of

experiences between the practicing teachers and persons involved in the development of the program allowed both parties to be sensitive to each other's positions. As the teachers perceived, one of the weakest aspects of the program was its failure to establish close contact between the participants and the developers of the program. Their expressions in this regard certainly called for some sort of sensitivity towards their lived world.

Theme five: Lack of professional confidence and commitment. This theme emerged on the basis of my conversations with Yog. Some of the topics that Yog and I discussed explored the relationships between his perceptions about the professional role and his participation in the training program itself. His commitment towards the profession had a relationship with the social status of teachers. What he felt about the profession had a direct relationship as to how he took part in the program and how he taught after being trained through the program.

Why did he become a teacher at the first place? This question led us to explore his perception of the profession.

> Y. I really didn't join the profession with a great degree of enthusiasm. I didn't want to be a teacher. I had rather preferred to join . . . the government job which would have allowed me to continue my studies. (Conversation on November 24, 1992).

In his comments it was evident that his teaching world consisted of a mixture of all kinds of experiences. Although it was a blend of both distress and contentment for him, his expressions revealed that he was often preoccupied with the former. He was hopeful that the radio-based BTT program might "rescue" him from such a psychological dilemma. However, as he noted, his participation in the program did not actually have any direct impact on such a lived world of teaching. Development of teachers' morale and self-esteem was one of the intents of the program but it did not actually penetrate the psyche with which Yog was functioning prior to his participation in the program.

> R. Do you think that the problem is also of the simplistic claims of the experts who developed the program that a good program will work out as planned?
>
> Y. The important thing I understood is that people are operating either because of compulsion or out of their sentiments and feelings. I guess we need to emphasize on the sentiment and feeling aspect. . . . No matter who the individual is, whether a teacher, a student, a parent, or someone who developed this radio program, everyone must operate with his or her own willingness and out of a sense of passion.
>
> R. Such a feeling cannot take charge among people who are under so much pressure of compulsion. It is related to many things.

> Y. It takes time. However, the program should be powerful enough to influence participants sentimentally. (Conversation on December 8, 1992).

Six years had passed since Yog started his career as a teacher. For those years he was living a teaching life which extended far beyond his interactions with children inside classrooms; confronting "inadequate" physical facilities at school, being involved in rigorous household activities, being preoccupied with a "fear" of forthcoming examinations, participating in the radio-based BTT program, being looked down upon by community people and thereby loosing self-esteem, etc. His teaching activities and relationships with children in and out of classrooms hinged upon all those factors.

> Y. Teachers are not in a good position. What I perceive from the daily experience is that teachers are looked down upon [in the community]. People think that teachers come to the profession only if no other jobs were available. In the community [people] do not call us teachers. They call us *Master*. You know they call us . . . [a swearword]. Therefore, teachers really find it depressing. This is what I feel. Because of poor economic conditions what else can you do when no better job is available? If you are about to fall off you have to get a hold of '*sisnu ko bot*' [a metaphoric expression of the sense of powerlessness] although it burns your hands. At least, you have been able to hold on and didn't die. Something like that. This is what people think. I am feeling this way. (Conversation on November 24, 1992).

This emotional statement of Yog explains the state of his morale as a primary teacher. His social status, the social pressure exerted on him, and his lost sense of self-esteem are some of the crucial aspects which, as I believe, direct his life in and out of the classroom. If such were the conditions surrounding him why should he continue to be a teacher?

According to Yog, taking-up the job of teaching which require little effort was more of a convenience than a genuine commitment. Besides, as he admitted, he did not need a "good" academic record to become a teacher. He did not want to lose the opportunity of being employed. Joining the profession, although it was not his preferred choice, did make a good deal of sense for him as it allowed him to work at home while at the same time utilizing the knowledge acquired at school. As an "educated" person he could not wholly be involved in his familial responsibilities.

> Y. I have responsibilities at home for household chores, agriculture, etc. Give hands to parents. I have no other choice [but to take up the job]. . . . [As well] my academic scores were not good enough in the SLC examination. Economically too we are poor. To get into the profession was not difficult. No "source-force" [political power] was needed. (Conversation on November 24, 1992).

Now, after having taught for more than six years he said he no longer aspired for any other profession. His physical, emotional, social, and intellectual states simply make it impossible for him to switch to any other profession. His story of being a teacher echoed that he was trapped in, but not completely motivated and encouraged by, the profession of teaching.

> Y. Now I don't think I will leave this profession because I have developed interests in teaching. I don't think I will enjoy another profession. . . . I am habituated to it. Besides, I have lost interest to join any other field. And also because of my own conditions I will not be in a position to leave this profession. (Conversation on November 24, 1992).

Although Yog said that he developed an interest in the profession, he could not be free from the preoccupation that the profession lacked dignity. He gets shattered when he does not get the kind of respect he deserves from the local people.

> Y. Now, about the harsh treatment against teachers, as I said, the attitude is pervasive not only among the people in the community but also among the administrators and civil servants. "This . . . teaching job is nothing challenging," I was told this by my own friend who is working for civil service. You feel depressed with such an attitude. (Conversation on December 8, 1992).

It was more of accepting the job and, as he mentioned, getting "habituated" rather than developing "interests" and be committed to it. This was his state of mind as he participated in the radio-based BTT program. Preoccupied as he was, how could his participation in the program bring about expected changes in his teaching practices? How could the participation alone ensure his commitment to teaching to the extent expected?

The societal pressures under which Yog has to work demands a role which perhaps is too challenging for him. Once people find him unable to meet such a demand he loses his credibility and in their eyes he does not deserve the kind of respect that an "authentic" teacher gets. A teacher perceived in this way is no longer "dependable" for quality education.

Moving our conversation from the general social context to a more specific context of parental interests on children's schooling provided me with some clues to make sense of the apparent distance between what the training program expected of Yog as a trained teacher and how he actually was practicing. In Yog's context, the parents, as concerned as they were about building the future of children through educational participation, were not very keen about keeping abreast of what was going on at the school. However, according to Yog, he too did not take the responsibility of informing parents about school activities. While he felt that contacts between community and school were necessary he regrettably confessed that such things were not happening. In such a context Yog does not find his

own role very significant in helping children fulfill parental aspirations. He also finds it difficult as to where the radio-based BTT program itself fits amidst all these problems. However, he felt it important for the program to draw the local peoples' interests in order for it to have some impact on the prevailing teaching-learning environment. Yog wondered why things were not happening as expected.

> Y. No. It is not taking place. Because parents should have been more interested to ask about what is taking place at school. Who are the teachers? Where are they from? Who are the more dedicated and regular teachers? What are the subjects that individual teachers teach? How is the teaching-learning situation? They should have shown some interests. But I wonder why they don't. Do they feel apprehensive or is it because of lack of time and their busy schedule or is it because they don't bother at all and are neglectful? I don't know why (Ha! Ha!) they don't take any interest. . . . Majority of the students come from poor farmers' families. Parents of children from such families don't come and ask about the kids. They would probably think that once the children are at the school they must be studying and learning. (Conversation on December 8, 1992)

Yog believes that if a child is to take advantage of the prevailing educational system his or her parents must have some sense of responsibility towards the child's education. Unfortunately, as a teacher he finds himself under constant pressure exerted by parents as well as administrators, and is solely responsible for preparing children for tough educational competitions. Educational innovations like the RETT project operate in isolation and without an adequate consideration to such issues.

The Meaning Related to Critical Concerns

Despite the fact that both Chandan and Yog knew that things were not progressing in the manner they would have desired in the schools, their services to the schools and community continued, often without any critical scrutiny of the impinging problems. Where did the controlling power lie that manifested the indifferent actions and "docile" nature of teachers within the school systems? This critical dimension was an integral part of our conversations. Both Chandan and Yog were as keen as I in developing an insight into the underlying agenda that kept the educational systems in the two schools so confused yet so animated. We tried to see the connection that the radio-based BTT program had with this type of hidden agenda.

Theme six: The necessity to accept the rituals imposed by the educational system. In the radio-based BTT program Chandan and Yog had an opportunity to learn some generic teaching methods and the techniques of teaching specific subjects in the primary

grades. The two of them were among the few successful participants of the program[4]. They represented a group who were being recognized by the government as the trained primary teachers. Therefore, a general expectation was that their teaching should be superior to that of the other untrained teachers, which also meant for them to work under a continuous psychological pressure to prove such a superiority. Their main responsibility was to effectively implement the prescribed primary curriculum.

The curriculum was the foundation of the entire activities of the radio-based BTT program. Therefore, the program was implemented with a general acknowledgment that the curriculum was a given document of primary education. In the training program Chandan and Yog were not provided with any opportunity to challenge the relevance of the curriculum for their respective contexts. Why could not curricular issues be a subject of critical discussion in a teacher training program? An inquiry into this question surfaced some of the underlying assumptions of the radio-based BTT program: that curriculum development and reform activities do not fall within the scope of the program; that the experts and intellectuals possess the authority to develop and amend the curriculum; that the practicing teachers do not have expertise to comment on curricular issues; that they have to be provided with training to implement the curriculum; that with the provision of training it will not be difficult for them to implement the curriculum. However, Yog and Chandan were indifferent about the process of curriculum development and accepted the daily routine of teaching after being trained through the radio-based BTT program.

R. Do you know how curriculum is developed?

C. How would I know? It must have been a subject of interest for the intellectuals, I guess. . . . Perhaps, [in order to have teachers' input] they might have contacted some teachers, because it would not be possible to contact all the teachers. As well, it may not be possible to make curriculum appropriate for all. (Conversation on February 16, 1993)

Y. The task of developing curriculum is indeed not easy. Those involved in this task may have to consider most general type of problems as everything cannot be incorporated and the curriculum cannot be made appropriate for everyone. Different places would have different problems. So, the curriculum can never be exactly relevant to all.

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[4]According to the 1987-90 data only 57% of the total participants of the radio-based BTT program have successfully completed the program (Holmes, Karmacharya, & Mayo, 1993, p. 162).

R. But the rule is that you must strictly make use of the textbooks prescribed according to curricular objectives. Does such a rule make any sense?

Y. No, I don't think it makes sense. But still we must teach textbooks as they are part of the curriculum. Perhaps, it is necessary to have a national curriculum because there has to be a consistent development all over the country. (Conversation on December 8, 1992)

It did not seem to bother Yog and Chandan that they did not have any say in the process of curriculum development and did not discuss about the curricular matters while taking part in the radio training program. There was no other choice for them but to be trained according to the rules. After the completion of the training, they chose to carry on with the teaching responsibilities without any complaint, rather paying the price for submitting to the curriculum as prescribed. It meant to face the difficulty of implementing the curriculum because of the uniqueness of the school conditions where they teach.

Both Chandan and Yog were trapped between the reality of their teaching context and the curricular demands being imposed upon them. But the pressure to fulfill the curricular demands was so intense that they were compelled to conduct classes which often lacked pedagogical thoughtfulness. They could not afford to "waste" time in being reflective of their actions because they were overtly preoccupied with the challenge of preparing children according to the prescribed curriculum. They were required to take a maximum load of teaching.

Equally burdened were the children who were required to "learn" all the lessons specified in the curriculum in the specified period of time. Any one who could not cope with the curricular demands would have to face the consequence of being left out as an "incompetent" child. Unfortunately, the majority of children belong to this category. The lived conditions of the children at Yog and Chandan's schools have already been explored in an earlier section. Now, because of the pressure that Chandan and Yog face and the curricular demands, they were compelled to forget the lived conditions of the children. Yog's statement about the emphasis on engaging children in homework presents an example in this regard.

Y. I make sure to give homework to children. . . . I had to be firm in ensuring that they do the homework which eventually helps them develop the habit. . . . Roughly, the homework I assigned in all subjects would require them to spend about 2 to 3 hours every day.

R. Was it a reasonable demand?

Y. How could that be reasonable? That would be, ha! ha!, a heavy load for them because at home too, parents would expect that kids give them hands in their daily chores. And also they need time to come to and get

> back from school. . . . But if they lost the habit of doing homework their academic standard would drastically go down. They would not learn what was being taught. We cannot cover everything in the classroom because there are so many students. While teaching a class of 60 to 80 students we won't be able to properly look at each one's work. If we want to see students doing good, particularly in a large class, we can at least help them develop habits. (Conversation on November 24, 1992)

In these words it is apparent that at the school children were supposed to comply with the rules laid out for them by the authority. Teachers were compelled to make unrealistic demands against the "helpless" children although the teachers knew that the children were not in a position to fulfill those demands. Why was the school allowed to function that way? Whose interest was it serving? It was difficult to find precise answers to these questions. However, for one thing it is clear that the teachers and the students did not have any control over their own educational problems. The controlling center lay somewhere else which was beyond their perception. At school the teacher and students worked together and practiced hard to make the handed-down curriculum work for them. The trend of homework was one of the efforts they could make. The teacher was responsible to ensure that children do the assigned work at home. But how did he or she try to ensure this, especially among those who could not comply with such a requirement?

> Y. They would be scolded and insulted in front of the other friends. "Look at this one who didn't do the homework. This one is not a good student and you should never be like him. He is a bad student." This is how I punish them. (Conversation on November 24, 1992)

This response, as spontaneous as it was, revealed an innocent conformity to the abstract power of the educational system alien to the local milieu. Children should be taught to comply with the rules of schooling although that might cost them other essential work at home supporting their livelihood while for the teacher it could mean being cruel to the helpless children. The future of the children, no matter how abstract it would be, should be considered seriously at the cost of the present.

However, despite so much concern towards abiding by the rules of schooling Yog's efforts to achieve the curricular objectives did not prove to be successful. He admitted that he was not successful in helping children become competitive and meet the educational standards set by the national curriculum. He attributed the problem to practical difficulties but not to the curriculum, which perhaps was the main problem.

> Y. In principle, we should have followed what radio training taught us but in practice we are operating on our own . . . where ever the situation leads us. For example, in a class of 80 students fewer homework would have to be assigned. If there are five questions asked in a lesson then we cannot ask them to do all five questions. Up to two questions

> should be assigned. Even this would demand a lot of time and effort and we barely would be able to check all of them. Therefore, while assigning homework we have to make sure that we check all of the submissions. (Conversation on November 24, 1992).

For Yog the curriculum that was available for him to implement was unquestionable and indisputable. The radio-based BTT program reaffirmed this "myth" by putting him through a process in which the activities were not so much focused on questioning but on finding the answers for him to be able to effectively implement the "unquestionable" curriculum. From what he said it appeared that the program did not provide him with opportunities to get to know how the school and the BTT curricula were developed. Why should not a program like BTT consider opening up this possibility for teachers?

Chandan's experience of learning through the radio training program and transferring the knowledge learned into her practices unfolded a critical aspect that questioned the legitimacy of the program itself. What echoed from the words she uttered was a sense of hopelessness of the skills she learned when it came to applying them in practice. Not only did she linked this sense of hopelessness to her lived context but also to the concerned authorities who were supposed to observe and evaluate her performance.

> C. I agree that the teacher should go to the class well prepared as told in the training program. But can you show me a single school where teachers are so committed? Do you think teachers are being recognized for their commitment and dedication? It does not make any difference whether one is committed or dishonest. (Conversation on February 16, 1993).

Chandan's argument implied that she could not be held responsible for the mess that was apparent in her school. She implied that her hands were tied and only could move to the extent that the invisible power allowed her to reach. Ironically, the power that controlled her movement itself would lose its grip over her for the simple reason that the former would diminish into such a tiny size that she would be lost in the giant palm. An appropriate analogy for this type of scenario might be a man trying to imprison an ant within the fist of his palm. Often the ant finds its way out. The whole business of teaching could be perceived as being a game of cat and mouse which seemed to have been accepted at all levels and ritualized for normal practices.

Meaning of the Radio-Based BTT Program for the Primary Teachers who Participated in the 1992/93 Session

Teacher Lalit

His Background

Lalit has been teaching at the Northern Primary School for the past seven years. Prior to that he taught in a school in the adjoining district for one year. The transfer to the present school was significant for him as it also allowed him to work at home and to farm. Only recently, after teaching for more than six years, did Lalit manage to obtain permanent tenure in the school which allows for pension, job security, and annual salary increments.

The physical condition of Lalit's school was depressing. The building was dilapidated with falling walls supported temporarily by poles at different points. As I learned from Lalit and the other teachers of the school, the building was destroyed by an earthquake that rocked the central and eastern part of the country in 1987. The Aids Committee for Earthquake Victims donated construction materials for the school but completing the construction was not the responsibility of the Committee. A structure, consisting of metal frames and roof for a new building, had been erected by the contractors appointed by the committee but walls, windows, and doors were yet to be constructed. The materials for doors and windows were piled in one corner of the office by the old building and construction had completely stopped. The teachers did not have any idea when the construction work would be resumed.

Children coming to this school belong to families of local farmers, mostly of a secluded tribe known as the Danuwar. The students' life-style was very different from that of children studying at schools in an urban context. Most of the children coming from the Danuwar tribe found it difficult to communicate in Nepali. In such a context, teachers like Lalit were forced to learn the Danuwar language in an attempt to establish some sort of relationship with the local children in classrooms. In Lalit's words:

> L. There is a fundamental problem of language. We could expect a better result if we provide primary education using people's mother tongue. They would learn easily because of the simplicity. It takes them two complete years to learn the [Nepali] language. (Conversation on December 12, 1992)

Lalit said that because of the language difficulty the children would not be able to learn according to the curriculum and only by the third year would they begin to read and write which they should have done two years ago.

> L. They would just think that it had always been like this . . . [and] the parents would think "my son didn't learn any thing although he has been to school for so many years." The father would be disappointed. Because of such conditions we are facing difficulties. (Conversation on December 12, 1992)

During my visits to Lalit's house I had an opportunity to become familiar with his wife and two children. His nine year old daughter was in grade four in the same school where he taught. The younger child who was 5 years old stayed with his mother while Lalit and the girl were at the school.

Lalit had recently separated from his extended family and moved into his own house. The main floor of the two storied house had two sections separated by a staircase. On one side was the kitchen and the other side was used for cattle. The house was typically known as "Goth-Ghar," which meant that the house was used for both cattle and people to live in. The area of each floor would approximately be 200 square feet. As we briefly stopped and drank tea at the house he told me how difficult it had become for him to keep up with the household chores as well as teaching.

Teacher Krishna

His Background

Krishna started teaching primary children in 1985. Before the transfer to the Eastern Primary School at his own village in March 1991, Krishna had taught in two other primary schools in other remote villages in one of the central districts. His experiences in the former schools were quite challenging. In order for him to reach one of the former schools from his native village, he was required to walk for a full day and one-half after getting off a bus at the nearest stop. He was not only teaching but also lived in the school. He cooked his meals and slept at one corner of the building during his entire tenure.

Krishna's present school was located over a mountain-top about a two hour trek up the hill from the nearest road where one could catch a bus. For Krishna, as well as for his fellow teachers and children, walking over the mountain was a way of life. Every morning he climbed up for about 45 minutes to reach the school from his house which was almost half- way between the road and the school.

Krishna's school-conditions were not much different from Lalit's. The school building consisted of six small rooms which were neither bright nor big enough. The furniture in the classrooms was not in good shape. As well, the classrooms were very cold during the winter months. In my visit to the school I found all the classes taking place out-doors.

A mixed group of students were enrolled in this school with the majority of them being Tamangs.

> K. In my school about 60% of the total students would be Tamangs, some are Gurungs, and others are Jaisi Bahuns. (Conversation on December 18, 1992).

Like the Danuwar children in Lalit's school, the Tamang children, particularly those newly enrolled, were having a difficult time understanding the Nepali language, the only official language and the medium of instruction in all the schools of the Kingdom. Here too, the teachers were compelled to learn the local language to be able to communicate with the children.

My visit to and one-night sleep-over at Krishna's house was interesting. I was introduced to his father, mother, and brother-in-law with whom I had a brief chat while eating the typical evening meal. I also saw Krishna's sister-in-law who was busy doing chores while the rest of the family were eating and talking. Her husband, Krishna's younger brother, was away in Kathmandu where he was studying and planning to work. There were three children at the house including an infant and his seven year old son.

Meaning of Participation in the Radio-Based BTT program

Between December 12, 1992 and March 13, 1993 I had four meetings each with Lalit and Krishan which included short and prolonged conversations along with their home and school visits.

On December 12, 1992 I met both Lalit and Krishna for the first time at the resource class of the radio-based BTT program. They showed their interest to participate after listening to what I said in the resource class about my project. After briefly introducing myself, I had told the 27 teachers present in the class that by engaging in three or four conversations with some individual teachers I would try and understand what it would mean for particular teachers to participate in the program while being engaged in his or her daily life. The number of teachers interested to participate was overwhelming but I explained why I was not in a position to work with more than two. They seemed to have understood my problem and, with the approval of others, Lalit and Krishan volunteered to participate. On the same day, I started my first conversations with each of them. Each conversation lasted approximately 65 minutes.

My relationship with them was not confined to our occasional conversations alone. It also included our informal discussions, which I called "small" incidents, as well as group discussions in the presence of other teachers at their respective schools and at the resource

classes. However, such "small" incidents were not tape-recorded as were the "formal" conversations.

The home and school visits along with several other meetings allowed me to have a relationship with Lalit and Krishna with a growing degree of intimacy. This relationship is still continuing as we have kept in touch with each other through letters. Both Lalit and Krishna were happy to be able to read my letters as much as I was to read theirs.

> L. I felt as happy to receive your letter as a child would be when his or her uncle comes by to visit him or her. Or if I were to measure the happiness I don't think I will be able to find the number that matches it. (Lalit's letter to me dated December 21, 1993)

> K. For the first time in my life I received a letter written by a Nepali brother from abroad. I have no words to explain how happy I am. I was so thrilled that I nearly danced. It was special for me because, so far, I only had bitter experiences with other people like you who were politically, economically, and intellectually high ranking. My experiences with them were full of false commitments and deceptions. So, your letter proved that I was wrong to perceive that an individual like me cannot be intimate with someone with high social status. Your letter has touched my heart. (Krishna's letter to me dated December 8, 1993)

The letters that I have received from them have contributed to attaining further clarity in my task of understanding their meaning of participation in the radio-based BTT program. The themes that I came up with after the analysis of the conversation texts are enriched on the basis of my further correspondence with the teachers. In the following section the themes and my interpretations of them are listed under the categories of technical, situational, and critical concerns.

The Meaning Related to Technical Concerns

Theme one: Learning to be procedural. For Krishna and Lalit the main purpose of participating in the radio-based BTT program was to become familiar with procedures of teaching the prescribed primary curriculum. They had some sense of guilt at having taught children without any training or apprenticeship in teaching. They believed that teachers' lack of knowledge about the standard procedures of teaching was one of the main reasons why rural children could not generally compete with others in the national examinations. Although Krishna and Lalit realized that the purpose of education should not be limited to examination results only, they thought that in the present context unfortunately this was what they were forced to be more concerned about. After all, in the final analysis what counted most was how much the children learned the subject matter in compliance with the curriculum and how they did in the national examinations. From their own experience they came to know that without a good result in examinations, education would hardly be useful

for children. So, they felt that they should learn the techniques that would allow them to help children do well in their studies which will eventually help them to score high marks in national examinations. Krishna and Lalit hoped that the techniques could be learned in the radio-based BTT program.

The technical notion of teaching that they had was related to their own schooling. While schooling opened up possibilities for them to integrate into the larger global system, it also required them to re-educate themselves regarding some of the traditional practices. Schooling taught them to value the ways of living which were different from how their parents and others in their community lived for generations. In so doing, they tended to move away from traditional practices. However, in our conversations they indicated that re-learning different values at the cost of their own values was a mistake—a mistake that they could not correct at the present point in time. Rather, for their own survival they had to make a hard choice of continuing to submit to the educational system that taught them to rely on a technical notion of teaching and learning. They could also see the same point being emphasized in the schooling of the children who they taught. Teachers like Lalit and Krishna did not have the power to re-construct education in such a way that they could identify in it their own culture and tradition. They made the choice of teaching children the curriculum handed down by a higher authority while parents continued to send children to school. Apparently, the expectation that they had of learning techniques of teaching seemed reasonable because they had the responsibility of teaching a curriculum that had nothing to do with the local culture. This technical notion of teaching that they had was related to their own experiences of schooling which I tried to incorporate in the following interpretation.

Lalit was a diligent and highly motivated student during his school days. Despite his father's objection he struggled hard to continue schooling and finished the tenth grade (SLC). He was keen on learning from textbooks and following precise bookish procedures in carrying out curricular exercises. The nature of being dependent on precise procedures began to show up in his day-to-day activities which made him different from the other members of his family. For example, his approach to tackling practical mathematical problems depended upon the procedure specified in the mathematics textbook. Even to do simple arithmetic he often required a pen and paper to put in order the mathematical symbols and compute them "procedurally."

However, as we discussed about the use of mathematical skills in practice Lalit could not disregard the strength of the intuitive process on which his "uneducated" siblings depended.

L. When I have to do mathematical calculation I go for a pen and paper but my elder brother does that mentally in relatively shorter time. I do not rely on him unless I get the same answer in my procedural computation. (Conversation on December 12, 1992)

Schooling did make Lalit a procedural person but did not necessarily ensure an increased degree of mathematical knowledge compared to what his "non-procedural" brother learned practically. Krishna made a similar comparison between his educationally conditioned life with that of his neighbor who dropped out of school in grade three. Schooling taught him to live a procedural life. But did it ensure a better life? Krishna roughly assessed the effect that his schooling had on his life by making the following statement.

K. Let me tell you how significant my educational achievement has been to me. I tend to compare my life with the man in the neighborhood. His family had the same economic standard as mine when we both were small boys. Both families at that time suffered from economic hardship. My father valued education so he sent me to school. The other boy also went to school but dropped-out in grade three. He grew up as a typical farmer while I studied, passed SLC and I.A. [Intermediate in Arts equivalent to grade 12] examinations, and became a teacher. Now I look at our economic conditions. My family is under a tremendous pressure to be more extravagant than his. We need to spend money for pursuing further education for me and my brother. Both my brother and I need to wear appropriate outfits while the neighbor does not have such a requirement. So, the present scenario is that economically he is well-off . . . [while] I have a debt of more than 30 thousand rupees. . . . Keeping all these things in view I tend to ask myself "What benefit did I get by going to school?" (Conversation on January 16, 1993)

Krishna could not be sure if he should have focused more on his farming activities than schooling. However, he was sure that in his present position his total return to the traditional life-style was impossible. By going to school he not only educated himself to be a "neat" person wearing a modern outfit but also he re-educated himself regarding his own traditional practices. He found himself confronted with a crisis of his own identity.

K. It's impossible to go back to the traditional life-style. . . . You have to be fit to be able to plow the field. Only by practice a farmer becomes a farmer. Now after joining school I have become impotent in carrying out agricultural work. (Conversation on January 16, 1993)

The only choice available for him now was to continue pursuing higher education. He intended to take the B.A. examinations. Professionally, his immediate intent was to be a trained teacher as well as to obtain tenure in the profession. Out of this interest he participated in the radio-based BTT program which again generally reaffirmed the necessity for him to be methodical or procedural in assuming his teaching responsibilities.

R. In spite of being aware of the consequences why do you want to pursue a further education? By participating in the radio-based BTT program too, I guess, you are indirectly making your life more complicated.

K. This is a matter of compulsion. As a teacher you have a certain role to play. You cannot be free from being judged, at the immediate level, by your own students. If I could not prove to be equally competent as others then I might lose my job. I am not implying the administrative action against me but the situation of being humiliated by students and other colleagues. So, this is a kind of compulsion that forced me to take part in the BTT program. It is not to disregard my self-motivation to learn but despite this I have other things to be worried about. (Conversation on January 12, 1993)

Lalit's interest to participate in the radio program was, however, spurred by his aspiration to learn more about the procedures of teaching and preparing children for the changing world. He felt that merely by being involved in teaching in isolation one would be left out and be detached from other diverse things happening outside his or her context. But he never had any opportunity to participate in any training program that allowed him to learn about events taking place outside his context. He felt that he could not be a well informed teacher because he merely kept on teaching without actually taking any formal training. Lalit, therefore, anticipated that his participation in the radio-based BTT program would allow him to be familiar to newer techniques of teaching.

R. What do you expect to learn in the radio-based training program?

L. I expect to learn more new things than what I already know. There must be new developments because time has changed now. I want to keep up with time. (Conversation on December 12, 1992)

Lalit's teaching involved implementing the curriculum of primary education developed centrally by the curriculum development unit of the Ministry of Education. He perceived this responsibility as being challenging, although he was not required to follow any structured professional guidelines that the school administration could have mandated. Typically, he was expected to be at the school from 10 in the morning to 4 in the afternoon and follow the routine of teaching. What he did in the classroom was entirely his concern. He never had to report, or teach a class, to the primary supervisor designated by the District Education Office.

For him, as he said, "controlling children and teaching subject matter in the classroom is not a problem but ensuring student learning is a big challenge" (conversation on December 26, 1992). What bothered him was that he already taught children for more than six years but did not know whether he did it in the manner he should have. He had experienced that children, especially in grade one, would not pay any attention to him.

> L. The classroom is open and children would easily get distracted. There would be 100-115 of them in grade one. I am having an extremely difficult time teaching them. And once children go out of control in grade one you could not improve their behavior in higher grades. (Conversation on December 12. 1992)

> L. While I am [teaching] in grade one I see the faces of tiny children. Some have just begun to speak while others appear confused and lost. They are so many of them. Now I ask myself how do I teach these children of such a diverse nature? (Conversation on December 26, 1992)

He felt lack of clear direction and training to be able to conduct classes with a great degree of confidence. When confronted with the "chaotic" moments in classrooms with the children, he then became helpless. He had to rely on his own ideas of teaching. Teaching became boring for him, especially in those moments when he was aware that his teaching was ineffective and did not have any method in hand to try out in those moments.

> L. How do I teach them? As far as I know I could have grouped them but where is the space? You lose interest and just spend time in class pretending to teach. (Conversation on December 26, 1992)

In the radio-based BTT program Lalit tried to look for new techniques or procedures of teaching that would help him conduct classes more effectively. But instead of becoming encouraged and interested to learn more from the program he rather became disappointed with the program. He said "to my disappointment I did not find any new thing in the program" (conversation on December 26, 1992). Interestingly enough, to be disappointed with the program itself was an educational experience for Lalit as well as me. We began to realize that no program could possibly provide teachers with precise recipes to be able to tackle the pedagogical challenges in a particular classroom. There were many other aspects that had direct or indirect contributions to how Lalit taught the children. Although, Lalit was apparently emphasizing procedure and technique he, perhaps unconsciously, was making continuous improvisations and pedagogical decisions in the classrooms which he did not learn in the program.

Krishna seemed to have a clever understanding of where he arrived at by jumping into the bandwagon of schooling that started in his childhood. Yet he could not feel so "empowered" that he reject the established concept of schooling when it came to "educating" his own son. However, he definitely could transcend himself from the two extreme positions of remaining totally ignorant of modernity and schooling, and blindly conforming to the procedural world of so called intellectuals. The position from where he was speaking must be acknowledged to have consisted of rich experiences which

unfortunately remained concealed within his intellect. Why could not such an experiential knowledge be utilized in the process of learning through the radio-based BTT program or any other teacher education program?

Theme two: Looking for techniques to cope with the changing world. This theme emerged out of the topics on changing world, education, and technique that Lalit specifically brought out in our conversations. Krishna did not have anything to contribute to this theme.

It was Lalit's perception that because of the lack of education among the other members of his family they had not been able to cope with a changing world. On the other hand, he always wanted to identify himself among the few educated people of his village. For him, his own education provided him with a technique to "transcend" him from his family's traditional world while his brothers had to remain incapable of communicating at an "intellectual" level.

> L. There are some things that are to do with the commonsense of educated people. Because my brothers dropped out of school in early grades, they are now facing difficulties in comprehending some of the technical languages other educated people in the village spoke. My brothers simply had to listen. Even I had a hard time explaining to them what was being said. In this sense you feel a little superior to others in the village who did not go to school. (Conversation on December 12, 1992)

In Lalit's perception there was another world besides the one where he and his family have been living. It was this other world and the possibilities available out there that lured Lalit. He felt that a "true" educational participation of people could make a difference in bringing changes in his "isolated" society. He seemed to have a strong faith in formal education and believed that it could provide people with techniques to alleviate their difficult living standard. He thought that at school children were learning not only to be able to read and write but also some basic habits and behaviors necessary to live in a "civilized" society.

> L. The first direct benefit of education is that children are learning to read and write. The other thing that I have noticed is that children, especially those from the backward tribes like Danuwar and Tamang, are learning to improve their habits. In the communities of these tribes it's O.K. for children to speak filthy words and play Khopi [a form of gambling]. Although, they usually take a long time to be able to read and write I could see them giving up those bad habits. . . . At least, they stopped speaking bad words and playing Khopi when we [teachers] are around. (Conversation on December 12, 1992)

Lalit was indeed very optimistic of education and of many "good" things that people could achieve through it. By becoming a teacher he not only wanted to diversify his own life-style but also help the local people alleviate the poverty and "misery" that most of them

had to live with. Teaching, therefore, was the initial step that Lalit took in transforming his world into the world of diverse possibilities that he perceived of.

> L. Teaching is putting children through a learning process which basically is necessary for human beings to survive in this changing world. For this purpose we need to learn what actions to take. This is the main thing when we talk about teaching. (Conversation on December 12, 1992)

Lalit believed on adopting changes as demanded by time and situation. Although he did not seem to be clear as to where such changes would ultimately take him and his society, he aspired to have the "necessary" changes required for "development." For him, the training of teachers is as important an aspect as the schooling of children, both of which contribute to converting the aspiration into reality.

However, it was quite difficult for Lalit to understand the purpose of his participation in the radio-based BTT program although he believed that it would definitely help him become a "better" teacher. When he became a participant of the program he did not have adequate information about it which made it hard for him to relate his situation to the program. Except for a vague idea, he did not have any specific purpose for participating in the program.

> L. The purpose is to gain something from the program. As I am already in the profession I should have opportunities to upgrade my capacity. With the participation in this program I wonder if I could condition myself as demanded by time. I wonder if I could achieve something. It has already been many years that I have been teaching, but I never had any chance to be a trained teacher. (Conversation on December 12, 1992)

In the past several years of working as a teacher he was looking for opportunities to prepare himself with the skills and knowledge necessary to be a catalyst of change. The program was one such opportunity that he felt he could possibly take advantage of. By participating in the program he hoped to learn new techniques of teaching that would contribute to changing his personal and communal life-style.

> L. As a teacher I always hoped to do something. Now I wonder, if my participation in the program prepares me according to present time and helps me become a teacher of necessary skills and knowledge so I can do something. (Conversation on December 12, 1992)

Apparently, Lalit had a vague expectation of being equipped with recipes of teaching which also appeared to be the intent of the radio-based BTT program. As I have described in Chapter II, the main purpose of the program was to deliver the skills of teaching specific subjects to its participants. However, Lalit's story took a different shape as he continued participating in the program. The enthusiasm which he showed in the first

conversation was not the same in the subsequent conversations. Although, there was a parallel between Lalit's expectations and the content of the program, he was not satisfied with the program when he actually participated in it.

In Lalit's view the program did provide some techniques of teaching. But he felt it extremely difficult to retain the techniques discussed through the radio programs because of the medium's limitations. Due to its nature of one way communication most of the lessons that were broadcast in the radio program would pass-by quickly without them being fully understood by him as the listener. Such a situation forced him to lose hope in the program.

> L. I do not have any complain against the content of the radio lesson-broadcasts. But, I did not get opportunities to learn them with extensive discussions. No matter how new, educational, and innovative were the lesson-broadcasts, if one was not allowed to critically discuss and comment on pertinent issues then the lessons could hardly make any sense. I am beginning to lose hope and take it merely as a means to obtaining a certificate that puts me in the category of trained teachers. (Conversation on December 26, 1992)

Not only did Lalit realize that the techniques broadcast in the radio were difficult for him to understand and retain but also, as we started linking the topic to his teaching context and his own lived world, we began to see why his participation in the program did not turn out to be as expected. We began to wonder if the techniques alone could be of any significance for him to be able to teach effectively in a context specific to him. On the other hand, he was also not sure whether to blame the radio-training program for his inability to take full advantage of it. It was difficult for him to make judgments about the significance of the broadcast lessons as, because of other inevitable commitments, he himself failed to listen to the radio program regularly. The linking of our conversation to his teaching context and other aspects of his life allowed us to unfold some of the topics related to his situational practices which are discussed in the following section.

The Meaning Related to Situational Concerns

Theme three: Teaching as living in-between curriculum as planned and curriculum as lived. On one occasion Lalit took me around the Danuwar village where most of the children who go to his school belong. He wanted me to see for myself how the Danuwars lived in "poverty" and "misery." His contempt for their traditional life-style was rooted in his experiences of teaching their children according to the prescribed curriculum. He believed that it was because of the "savage" living conditions at home that the children were finding it difficult to cope with the educational system.

Referring to the poor student turnout on that particular day, Lalit told me that there was a special ceremony known as "Chhewar" being celebrated in some of the Danuwar

families. Later on, as Lalit and I took a walk around the village I noticed three houses where people had gathered to celebrate the ceremony. They were so engrossed in the celebration—drinking, eating, dancing, singing, and playing traditional musical instruments—that they appeared to be the happiest people on earth. Obviously, children would not want to go to school and miss such an occasion. Lalit, however, strongly opposed the "ignorance" of the parents towards schooling of their children by continuing to embrace their traditional life-style.

His frustration with the situation was understandable as he had a responsibility of educating their children who came to school without "appropriate" training at home but were required to take up the challenge of learning according to the national curriculum as planned. He had to teach them a language which was not their own, social studies which they could not make sense of, the moral values which contradicted with how they lived, health education which did not bring any change in their traditional health habits, and mathematics that they rarely applied in their daily life. In such a situation Lalit definitely found it difficult to carry out his job of teaching "effectively."

Now, Lalit was to improve his teaching competencies by participating in the radio-based BTT program which did not specifically focus on problems unique to his context. He was of the view that the program was developed with a general intent of helping teachers become skilled to teach children according to the national curriculum as planned. But, the situation was not so favorable that he could easily implement what was taught in the program.

> L. The radio training program must have been developed with a view to addressing the overall aspects of all the districts where it has been currently implemented. . . . I doubt, if even once they [the program developers] have mention the name of the "Danuwar" tribe while developing the program. Perhaps, they don't even know that these people exist here. (Conversation on December 12, 1992)

Krishna, on the other hand, had an understanding that the radio training program was to broadcast specific technique of teaching specific lessons. He explained to me about this understanding recalling one of the lessons that he had listened to on the radio about teaching a unit on "Vidyalaya (School)" under social studies instruction.

> K. The radio program delivers techniques of teaching. Its activities involved discussions on instructional issues like how teachers should be aware of children's psychology to be able to teach effectively, what problems might they encounter in the classroom, and how could your instruction be organized to avoid all such problems, etc. . . . For example, the broadcast lesson on "Vidyalaya" taught about the step by step activities and the materials to be used in teaching this unit. . . . In case if I missed any unit then I could find the same unit in the Self-

Instruction Materials provided by the program. (Conversation on December 12, 1992)

What did it mean for Krishna to learn the techniques that the program broadcast through the radio or mentioned in the Self-Instruction Materials? How could he make use of them in his specific teaching context? Obviously, the program expected that he use them in his instructional activities. But Krishna could not be sure of the extent to which he would use them in classroom. What appeared to be forgotten in the assumptions about him, was that his teaching responsibilities could not be separated from his total being.

K. I cannot do without being involved in my other personal work of farming. Can you imagine my condition if I had to survive only on my net salary? I am, however, fortunate enough that I did not have to worry about that as I have been making use of my evenings and mornings and other seasonal time for the purpose of earning extra income by farming. My involvement in such personal activities prevents me from giving extra time for preparation of lesson plans, instructional materials and other creative instructional activities. (Conversation on January 16, 1993)

K. To be an ideal teacher, that the program wants you to be, I could not only be teacher from 10 to 4 [school hour]. I am required to think teaching around the clock. But, what I don't have is time. Am I earning enough from teaching that fulfills my basic requirements? Can I ever be free from all these preoccupations? So, all these things are attached to my teaching life. I am not saying that I can justify being an irresponsible teacher because of my other commitments. I do worry about the education of my students. As much as possible I will try and make use of the skills learned in the training program. (Conversation on December 12, 1992)

Clearly, Krishna and Lalit somehow managed to live and carry out their teaching responsibilities as they find themselves caught-up between curriculum as planned and curriculum as lived. They acknowledged the difficulties of making the curriculum of both school education and the radio-based BTT program appropriate to their local contexts. They did not expect that the curriculum of the program as planned could be changed to meet every teacher's pedagogical needs. Although several methods mentioned in the program and the Self-Instruction Materials were unrealistic and too simplistic to adopt in their contexts, they wanted to take the training experience positively and make use of the aspects appropriate for them.

K. There were many things that were said on the radio broadcasts that appeared unrealistic to use in my context. I could still take advantage of the program. Most of the teaching methods discussed could be appropriate in an ideal teaching atmosphere. Yet the participation in the program had been a good learning experience. There were ideas which

> I could make connections to my context. (Conversation on January 16, 1993)

Lalit too had expressed his sense of optimism. He thought of taking a practical approach to living his teaching life by making some possible adjustments in the curriculum as lived. Only by making such an adjustment in his teaching practices might he then make some sense of his participation in the program

> L. The radio-based BTT program should make sense. You should be able to adjust yourself to make sense from it. I am not anticipating that the program will match our needs. [Rather I am anticipating] just the opposite. I am looking forward to using the program this way. (Conversation on December 12, 1992)

But such a view led him to find the lived context problematic. He unwittingly sought local people's cooperation to conform to the available educational system and make sacrifices for the "good" of their children. As he became unsuccessful to ensure such a cooperation he found the people "ignorant" and unaware of the long-term benefit of education.

Although he was fervently critical of the way the Danuwar people spend their day-to-day life he accepted the challenge of educating their children as sensitively as possible. The relationships he had established with the children indicated that he was living within the tension of curriculum as planned and curriculum as lived. While engaging in the act of teaching and being with the children he was calm and doing his best to make his teaching as meaningful for them as possible. I took note in my journal of what I felt as I was observing his teaching of Nepali Language in the fourth grade. An excerpt of the journal entry reads like this:

> I could not think of any better way that Lalit could have handled and taught so many children of grade two. Despite the poor physical facility with a dusty, congested, and dark classroom he managed to draw children's interest to what he wanted to teach. (My journal entry on January 26, 1993)

One striking example that intrigued me was his use of the local language while communicating with some of the children who had a difficult time understanding the national language. Because of his ability to speak the Danuwar language an astonishing difference was noticed in the teaching-learning atmosphere. Following the curriculum he would simply have conducted all the instructional activities in the national language. But Lalit did not seem to ignore his pedagogical responsibility. He had been speaking the local language, although he himself had to learn to speak it, to communicate with the children. I thought, the children were fortunate to have him as their teacher who could play a mediating role for them between their schooling, where they were supposed to learn with

the help of an "abstract" curriculum, and their "isolated" social and historical context through which they came into being.

The forty-five minutes which I spent in that classroom had been an unforgettable experience for me. After reflecting upon what took place in the classroom and reading what I entered in my journal, I again scribbled the following note on the opposite page of the previous day's journal entry.

> Many teachers face problems of establishing good relationships with children in classrooms. There is a lot that can be learned from Lalit's experiences not only by such teachers but also by the developers of teacher education materials like the ones in the radio-training program. Sharing experiences of teachers like Lalit with other teachers may itself be educational for them to become good pedagogues, while incorporating such experiences in teacher training programs may encourage participants to be reflective of their own practices. (My journal entry of January 27, 1993).

Although, in my view, Lalit's teaching could hardly be more appropriate in the given situation, he realized that most of the children in his class did not meet the academic standard of the curriculum. The failure to meet the curricular standard became evident in the yearly examinations. There were children repeating grades as many as four times because they could not pass the examinations. On the very day I visited Lalit's school I briefly chatted with a parent who was trying to persuade Lalit to let his son move up to grade five from grade four although he could not pass the tests. He expressed his worries that his son might not continue in grade four because he felt it embarrassing. Besides, he complained, it had already been eight years since he started coming to the school.

Lalit also estimated that the way the 28 children were learning (the planned curriculum) in the current fifth grade, less than five might be able to eventually pass the SLC examination.[5] So, if he was to be assessed from the point of view of "imparting" curricular content to children he could not be considered a successful teacher. But would it be reasonable to take that scenario as the basis to evaluate the teacher? Despite his serious efforts to help children learn the subject matter of the curriculum and be able to pass tests, many of them were not being helped. The radio-based BTT program was supposed to train him to become an "effective" teacher who should be able to provide students the help they needed to successfully learn the content information outlined in the curriculum. But he thought that even after completing the training program he might not become the kind of effective teacher that the program expected of him.

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[5]The national pass rate over the past decade ranged from 20 to 30 %.

L. There is a lot of things that the curriculum demands. If I were to follow them then there are much more topics that need to be taught. . . . But students are not ready to enter into this kind of learning process. . . . [Besides] if a teacher was to follow the formal rules of teaching—for example, preparing lesson plans, be precise of the activities he would be carrying out in classroom, conduct daily evaluation of students—then he would always be busy only in teaching-related-activities. . . . [But] it would not be practically possible to continue the work at home as there would be piles of household chores waiting for you. You cannot put away household works because the salaries are not sufficient to survive. (Conversation on January 26, 1993)

Unfortunately, both Lalit and Krishna found that the core substance of the radio-based BTT program also emphasized the same unrealistic activities that the curriculum expected of them. Therefore, the initial determination of appropriating the program according to their instructional needs had only been a temporary spirit. The program proved to be so inappropriate, both because of personal and professional reasons, that they were never keen to be regular listeners of the broadcast lessons. However, Lalit did not miss any of the nine resource classes while Krishna was absent for at least three sessions.

R. Did you have any opportunity to share your experiences in the radio-training program?

L. No. Not what so ever. I had a high hope in the beginning but I could not achieve any thing. It kept on broadcasting and I kept on doing things my way. In my occasional listening I used to find it talking about the standard methods and techniques but for some reason they were of no practical use for me. (Conversation on March 9, 1993)

It was indeed a very complex situation in which Lalit was working and living. Talking to him, visiting his home, community and school, and observing him teach the children (who did not even have shoes and "proper" clothes on) was an opportunity for me to be re-educated—about several aspects impinging on the educational development of children in a rural context in general, and about the relationships between the radio-based BTT program and Lalit's lived world in particular. I could feel that his participation in the program was hardly making any connection to his teaching life. But he made me feel that there were many more things that the developers of the program could have learned from him than what he might have learned, if any, from the program.

In spite of being aware that most of the children Lalit and Krishna were currently teaching would not even make it up to the tenth grade, they continued to put every effort they possibly could in helping children learn the curricular content. They both knew that the social, cultural, and historical context of the children were such that the general curriculum as planned could not be integrated successfully in the teachers' instructional world as lived. Yet, they accepted the challenge of being in-between the tension of the

curriculum as planned and the curriculum as lived and in my view they were fairly successful in maintaining the required balance between the two. Unfortunately, such type of experiential knowledge received no recognition in the body of knowledge that had so far been developed in the field of Nepalese teacher education.

Theme four: Irony of distance in distance learning. The opportunities to have periodic meetings with Lalit and Krishna while they were participating in the radio-based BTT program, allowed me to gather a fairly comprehensive account of the sense they had made about the program. Unfortunately, the enthusiasm with which they started the program did not last till the end. However, they both completed the program but only Krishna became an officially trained teacher by passing the examination. Lalit mentioned about his "failure" in his letter to me.

The combination of the radio program and the resource classes was supposed to facilitate them become "competent" teachers. As well, the medium used had a very noble and sensitive purpose—that of minimizing "distance." But what sort of distance was it that the radio-based training program was supposed to have considered?

If the program had claimed itself to be a distance education approach then the concept of distance must not be confined to geographic or physical distance between the learner and the teacher. Ironically, the distance aspect of this distance education approach, as I learned from my conversations with Lalit and Krishna, did not get the kind of attention that it should have in the overall structure of the program

One of the distant relationships that appeared to have been ignored in the overall design of the program was between the specific situations where Lalit and Krishna worked and the content of the radio programs. Although Krishna and Lalit started the program with a high degree of enthusiasm, towards the end of the program they both mentioned that their situational practices and the program content did not supplement each other. There was not much that they gained from the program.

> L. I really could not make good sense out of the program. We are already approaching near the final examination of the program. The most I should be doing is study the self learning materials thoroughly and pass the test . . . and be eligible for Rupees 45 extra allowance in the monthly salaries. (Conversation on March 9, 1993)

> K. It has been hard to make sense out of the program because I found it too superficial. What you hear in the radio is mostly sample lessons prepared with an assumption that schools have appropriate teaching/learning atmosphere and teachers have enough preparation time. (Conversation on March 3, 1993)

A sensitive observer would not expect them to be more creative and dedicated teachers than what they already were at the given situation. Already they were taking a full load of teaching responsibility by teaching all the instructional periods. Any external intervention demanding additional commitments from them could not be more unrealistic. There were numerous other factors which needed careful and sensitive attention. Some of those factors were students' pre-knowledge about the curriculum, the extent to which the curriculum was appropriate for the local environment, the students' home environment, the extent to which parents showed concern towards the education of their children, the teachers' work-load, the school's infrastructure, the availability of basic materials at school, and so on. At both Lalit and Krishna's schools none of the above factors was adequate. The most striking problem was finding the curriculum relevant in the two contexts.

The flaw that was apparent in this regard could be traced back to the very foundation upon which the program was conceived and developed. The program did not challenge the existing curriculum of primary education but took it for granted and used it as the blueprint in constructing the program structure. At the early stage of organizing the foundational materials of the RETT project, a serious mistake was made by assuming the curriculum as a valid document and was perceived to have had a problem of improper implementation due to the shortage of trained and competent teachers. So, its other tacit assumption was that if the existing untrained teachers could be trained on a massive scale the problem would no longer be a problem. Even at present time this error has not been admitted as being a mistake and the basic elements of the curriculum remain unchanged, although occasionally it has been through some minor revisions. Therefore, the wide distance which exists between the lived world of teachers like Krishna and Lalit, and the substance of the curriculum, not only remains wide but is getting wider.

The Meaning Related to Critical Concerns

It was clear in the conversations with both Krishna and Lalit that the purpose with which they started school was not clear to their parents. The conversations also revealed that the same scenario still continues in their respective villages in that parents have no clear idea as to why they were sending their children to school. However, they have a rather vague perception, as did the parents of Lalit and Krishna, about sending children to school. Almost all of them hope that schooling helps their children have a "better" future. Krishna's own schooling was prompted by a similar hope of his father which Krishna reported like this:

K. My father had a feeling "if I somehow support my sons to study up to SLC level then they might have a good future." (Conversation on January 16, 1993)

With both Krishna and Lalit I spent some time critically questioning why people in their respective villages remained distant from school and its activities yet they considered schooling of their children as a means to a "better" future. Did it have any relationship with the view with which the Nepalese educational system has been shaped? The themes that are discussed in this section dealt with such critical concerns. The questions on which we dedicated part of the conversations were: What did children learn at school that should lead them to a better future? Who decided what they should learn? What was the better future in the first place? How were Lalit and Krishna's positions as "educated" people different or "better" from others? Where did the radio-based BTT program stand amidst all these questions?

Theme five: Teaching and learning through an imposed curriculum. Both Lalit and Krishna indicated that the majority of the children coming to their respective schools found their home and school two unrelated worlds. Many parents were not too keen to send their children to school because they were the economic support of the family. Although the parents accepted that schooling might mean a brighter future for their children, they could not jeopardize their survival in the immediate present. After all, no one would ever live to enjoy a bright future if he or she could not make it through the present difficulties. On the other hand, parents who sent their children to school did not see their schooling as supportive to the family culture. The longer the time that children spent in school the bigger the chance for them to separate from the family. Lalit and Krishna presented themselves as examples of such cases. This was an important issue that impinged upon how they conducted themselves at school as teachers. Lalit and Krishna indicated that teachers as well as community people were cynical about the prospects of children's schooling. Since this issue was not of any concern in the radio-based BTT program, the question as to why in an innovation of this type such a serious issue was swept under the carpet provided an interesting topic to probe into. Let us proceed with concrete examples of how cynical parents were about the schooling of their children and then try to understand what interests spurred the radio-based BTT program.

Krishna described his experience of teaching in a school at a remote village inhabited mostly by Magars (an isolated tribe like Danuwars) which confirmed how disinterested they were about the schooling of children.

K. Out there, most of the children would already be 12 years old by the time they completed grade three. Then everyone would have started

> [working] weaving carpet. . . . The villagers used to say "it would help us survive if they [children] weave carpet. Or at least if they took care of 20 goats this year by next year they would be big enough and ready for selling. We would then be able to enjoy the Dasai festival with enough food and clothing. We get nothing by sending children to school." (Conversation on December 12, 1992)

Similarly, Lalit's honest effort to convince the local people to be considerate of their children's schooling often got snagged by their flat denial.

> L. It is extremely difficult to elicit people's cooperation. The children come to school whenever they feel like it or whenever their parents send them. . . . When I wanted to convince the parents then one of them responded to me like this: "He is my son and why does it bother you if I did not care whether he goes to school or not?" (Conversation on December 12, 1992)

Although, Lalit did not approve of the people's distant relationships with the school, he had to continue teaching their children. He, along with the other teachers, expected that the villagers should have considered the school as their own and extended their help, at least in the urgently needed work of repairing the dilapidated school building and completing the new one. The teachers at the schools of Krishna and Lalit indicated that parents were not concerned about what went on in school. However, it did not mean that they had totally rejected the idea of schooling. Most of them allowed their children to linger in the school system and let them try taking "chances" in it. The parents would rely on teachers for the education of their children. Examination results were the only indicator which the parents used for knowing how children were doing at school.

> K. People in the village expect that I be instrumental for the success of children. The success is measured in terms of examination results. . . . They do not care about any other thing. They do not care what children learned. They are interested to know the rank with which their children passed the tests. (Conversation on December 12, 1992)

Although, this scenario appeared to have emerged out of the situational "constraints," both Krishna and Lalit indicated that it had a firm connection to how the people at the policy level viewed education and what they have been doing in the name of educational development. For example, the value parents were forced to give to examination results of their children reflected the government's tacit policy of maintaining control over schools and to force them to remain an institute where teaching/learning activities would comply with the elements of the prescribed curriculum.

In my conversations with Lalit and Krishna we began to probe into the issues related to the adoption of centrally developed curriculum, we could begin to see how the "confusion" created by its implementation was related to the interests of those who had control over it.

Krishna and Lalit did not have a clear idea how the curriculum that they were given to implement in their respective schools was developed. In their perceptions only the national level "experts" could be involved in its development. They did not think that their involvement would have made any sense. Krishna thought that teachers might have been represented by the individuals from the two national level teachers' associations.

> K. Perhaps the government invites representatives from the two national teachers' associations. We as the teachers in such an isolated primary school can never represent the associations. So, we hardly play any role in curriculum development and planning activities taking place at the national level. (Conversation on January 28, 1993)

Because of the "low" position that Krishna perceived about his own status in the hierarchical structure of the country's educational system, he could not even consider getting involved in the process of curriculum development. He might have been represented by the teachers' association in which he was the member. But to what extent did the individuals nominated by the association really represent teachers like Krishna and Lalit?

Lalit had made a point, which I found was very important, that curricular decisions made without consultation with practicing teachers could be practically inappropriate. He was referring to the government's decision to mandate new textbooks in primary level as a result of changes made in the curriculum. He did not know what changes were made in the curriculum but he came to know about the new textbooks which were made available to the school. So, he could at least assess them from the point of view of his practical knowledge.

> L. It is unfortunate that the old books can no longer be used. The quality of the new book is inferior to the old one. We have no idea why the change has been made. The paper is so thin that children will have them torn in no time. The paper of the old book is relatively thick yet they get torn within 3 to 4 months. The illustrations were better in the old one. (Conversation on January 26, 1993)

Curriculum got changed, as Krishna said, at the national level but the two teachers practicing at the local level were not aware of such an event. Although it could be assumed that other teachers could have been involved in the process of changing the curriculum, one has reasons to believe that those teachers did not represent teachers like Lalit and Krishna.

> K. [The representatives from the teachers' associations] may not know what it is like to teach in a village like ours. They may, however, present themselves as the politically conscious as well as economically sound teachers. (Conversation on January 28, 1993)

Once the decisions about the curriculum were made at the "high" level and the new textbooks were supplied to schools then the authority felt the need to make teachers aware

of what changes were made in the textbook. The District Education Office had invited one teacher from all the local schools to participate in an orientation program on how to go about using the new textbooks. The teachers would have to adopt the curriculum without any question about its relevance to their contexts. The radio-based BTT program on the other hand would prepare teachers with the techniques of implementing the curriculum. This approach to curriculum development and teacher training that the government has taken indicated that the government is not interested in establishing a collegial relationship between the "experts" and practitioners. The power to manipulate the curriculum and teacher training program is reaffirmed in the hands of experts while practitioners become the victims of instrumentalism and technical rationality.

Krishna tried to show some degree of understanding towards the government's centralized approach to making curricular decisions. In his view, the curriculum was linked to national objectives. For this reason it would have been inevitable for the government to develop the curriculum centrally with the involvement of experts which perhaps included representatives from the two national teachers' associations.

Representation of people from all walks of life was the key term, Krishna thought, that the government might have used to justify its process of curriculum development. As long as there was a true representation Krishna did not have any complaint to make. But he expressed his doubt against the so called representatives of teachers who would claim that they could speak for him and his other colleagues.

> R. Don't the teachers-representatives claim that they represent your feelings too?
>
> K. They would say so. But for them to truly represent us, they should have built the foundations of the association upon the local context. They should have arranged local, and regional level seminars or get-togethers to be able to understand people's feelings. But if they had directly become involved in the national level policy making without actually contacting us, then their claim was false. So far, it has not come to my knowledge about the organization of any such local level get-together. (Conversation on January 28, 1993)

It could be understood from Krishna's argument that he was skeptical about the extent to which the individuals involved in the process of curriculum change were well informed and sensitive to the local context. Similarly, Lalit did not think that the new textbooks were actually any improvement. Yet, they both did not have any other choice but to use the textbooks and continue helping children, perhaps, to be more frustrated.

What effect did the implementation of an imposed curriculum have on student learning? There was a distinct discrepancy between the local situation and the curricular expectations. The curriculum seemed to assume that schools would have adequate physical

facilities, children would have come with adequate pre-knowledge to take up the challenge of learning further through the curriculum, they would have an appropriate educational environment at home and family support for schooling, teachers would be in a position to put an adequate effort in instructional activities, and so on. But at the schools I visited, none of those assumptions were working. Neither could one expect that it would ever work.

Ironically, the government let such situations continue with only sporadic efforts to consolidate the school atmosphere. For example, through the radio-based BTT program it urged teachers to improve their competency to effectively implement the primary school curriculum. As long as a culturally and situationally inappropriate curriculum is imposed upon teachers and students, with an indirect effect on parents and community, a consolidating program such as BTT would simply prove to be superficial or patch work. This was perhaps one of the lessons that the "experts" controlling the educational system could have learned from teachers like Lalit and Krishna.

Meaning of the Radio-Based BTT Program for the Resource Teachers

Resource Teacher Bhagvat

His Background

Bhagvat started his career 26 years ago as a primary teacher. For the past 21 years, he has been a secondary school English teacher in his present school. He began teaching with a SLC level of education (ten years of schooling), and now has a B. Ed. degree with training in English language, guidance and counseling.

Bhagvat is a dynamic and dedicated teacher engaged not only in teaching but also in various other social services. He has worked as a resource person in number of programs conducted to improve the educational standards of primary school children. In addition, he has acted as the co-teacher in English in the workshop/training program for the teachers of five nearby districts. This program was organized in 1986 by a team of four members from the Canadian Teachers' Federation.

When I first met Bhagvat, he was accompanying a group of visiting Swiss experts to finalize a hospital project in the local community. He was assuming a key role in making the hospital project a success. I gathered from my first contact with him that he belongs to that category of teachers who do not just confine their professional activities within the four walls of the classroom but extend well beyond it to the community at large. In all of our three conversations, he indicated that teaching for him was more than just accomplishing the specified school related activities.

As evident from the following excerpt of our first conversation, his interest in community development has a very interesting history.

R. Do you remember any of your teaching experiences as a primary teacher?

B. Well, it was during the year 2024-25 (1968-69). The condition was extremely difficult and there was a lot of suffering even to run an ordinary school. It was extremely difficult to find teachers. When I was working as a primary teacher our school didn't have its own building.

R. Where did you work?

B. In this community we have another secondary school. . . . That school used to be a primary school where my teaching career started. . . . In the beginning, for about six to seven months, the classes were conducted at the hostel of the present secondary school where I am teaching now. We had to move from there as they needed the hostel for themselves.

> We didn't have any place so we had to run the school at different shelters and yards within some temples. It lasted for about 6 months. We could not conduct classes during hot summer days nor during rainy days. Such were the conditions. . . . After school we used to line-up the students and march through the market chanting, "We want a school building." We wanted to raise public consciousness. (Conversation on November 24, 1992)

As the resource teacher of the Radio-based BTT program Bhagvat worked for only one year during the 1991/92 session. He did not understand why he was picked as the resource teacher only for that particular year and not allowed to continue the job in the following years.

> B. There are nine [resource] centres in this sector. In my centre there used to be a different resource teacher. But this year they chose me. I have no idea why they chose me. When we met in the introductory session there were four old resource teachers and rest were new. I couldn't understand why the old teacher was not invited from my centre. I could have learned from his experience. I certainly didn't have the kind of experience he had. (Conversation on November 24, 1992)

Although Bhagvat served the Radio-based BTT program for one year as a resource teacher he did not have any contact with the individuals at the program's central office. So, he did not have adequate information about the program while he was working as the resource teacher.

Resource Teacher Prakash

His Background

Prakash's inspiration to become a teacher was one of his teachers during high school in Kharsang, India. He remembers the brilliant personality of his role-model who devoted his entire life to teaching, and he feels proud to be a teacher himself.

> P. I never regretted having joined the profession. . . . The Teacher, who also was my role-model, . . . started teaching at the age of 21 or 22 in the high school I was studying. He was still a teacher of the same school when he died later. I was inspired by him and I was being advised by him. I was one of his best students. I followed his path. So, this profession which I took up as a starting career of my life will, I think, remain the same until I die. I never lost dignity in my profession. (Conversation on December 19, 1992)

Originally Prakash was from Sankhuwasabha district located more than 500 kilometers east of Kathmandu valley, physically separated by ragged mountains and accessible only through a natural trail or by airplane. After completing a B. A., he came to Kathmandu where he taught in a local secondary school for some time before moving to his present village about 54 kilometers away. Unlike his original district, the present place is

connected to the capital city by a highway. He now has a moderate house of his own where he recently managed to install a television set that has been an attraction for the family as well as others in the community.

For the past 22 years Prakash has been teaching English in secondary schools, mostly in one school. Over the years, he has witnessed some major changes in the school environment, especially in terms of student population. He does not find the school environment as comfortable as it used to be some 10-15 years ago when, because of fewer student numbers, his relationship with them was much closer and cordial.

R. The students you taught on those days must be holding responsible posts now?

P. Yes, some are engineers, some doctors, and some are the members of parliament too. They have really grown up.

R. What used to be your class size?

P. In the beginning when I came to teach at [this school] the school used to run from grades 6 to 10 and the total number of students was 117. In grade 10 there used to be 9-10 students. I used to teach in grades 6 through 10. The student-number was greater in lower grades than in higher grades. In grade 6 there were about 30-35 students.

R. That means in the classes you taught you must have personally known each student?

P. Well, in that sense it was like tutoring rather than teaching a classroom. I used to have a very good contacts with them.

R. Do you also have the same sort of contacts with your present students?

P. No, not in the present classes. In one section of a particular grade alone there are 110 students. So, even after completing a whole academic year you don't get to know names of some of the students.

R. So, you no longer have the kind of feeling you used to have in teaching smaller grades?

P. I no longer have that pleasure. The sort of individual attention that I could give on those days, is no longer possible now. Class size is large. Students too come from diverse social backgrounds. So, teaching a large class is not satisfactory.

R. Do you mean to say that students didn't learn as much as they could have?

P. No, I don't think they did. (Conversation on December 19, 1992)

Prakash was given the job of resource teacher in the Radio-based BTT program in 1990. The 1992/93 session, which I attended, was his third session. His resource classes

typically consisted of 25-30 primary teachers coming from the satellite primary schools scattered as far away as about 2 hours walking distance from Prakash's school where he conducted the resource classes. In the last session the initial enrollment of 28 teachers rose to 34 by the end of the session. Lalit and Krishna, the other participants of my research, were among those 34 teachers.

Meaning of Participation in the Radio-Based BTT Program

I had three conversations with Bhagvat (on November 24 and December 28, 1992, and January 18, 1993) and with Prakash (on December 19, 1992, and February 13 and 27, 1993). Each of the conversations lasted about ninety minutes. I came up with twenty-two and forty-one topics from the transcripts of the first conversations with Bhagvat and Prakash respectively. In our subsequent conversations I tried to obtain further clarity on those topics. As understood in those series of conversations and from my participation in the actual resource classes conducted by Prakash, I have come up with an interpretation of the meaning of the topics. The meaning has been presented below in the form of various themes under Aoki's (1984) technical, situational and critical orientations.

The Meaning Related to Technical Concerns

Theme one: Lack of participant motivation due to ineffective program structure. Although the radio-based BTT was a technically prepared pre-packaged program, it failed to provide a technical solution to the problem of motivation. In the words of Prakash and Bhagvat, a technique to indirectly motivate its participants should have been considered in the program because in their respective resource classes they were confronted with a problem of lack of self interest among the participants. This lack of self interest was a state of mind that they had observed as being pervasive among the primary teachers of rural Nepal for more than 20 years. But in Prakash and Bhagvat's perception, this problem did not get enough attention in the program. They thought that it was naive to implement the program without anticipating that participants should at least show an interest in listening to the radio lessons broadcast every evening (which constituted 80 hours of the 150-hours radio-based BTT program). Prakash and Bhagvat indicated that the disinterested teachers could be motivated directly by showing concerns and sensitivity towards their problems. There also were other methods by which teachers could have been indirectly motivated in learning from the radio programs.

In their respective resource classes Prakash and Bhagvat tried to initiate discussions on broadcast lessons. But teachers never showed interest which implied that they did not care to listen to the broadcast lessons. This inattention meant participants did not come to

the resource classes with any broadcast related problems or issues. Apparently, the broadcast lessons did not become an object of critical reflection and discussion in the resource classes. Why then would they be interested at all in listening to the broadcasts?

> B. The participants were supposed to listen to the radio regularly. But it seemed to me that most of them never listened. . . . One of my responsibilities was to discuss the problems that teachers had encountered while listening to the radio and try to find solutions to them. . . . But most of the teachers did not come with any problems. (Conversation on November 24, 1992)

> P. Apparently, it is a nine-month long program with daily broadcast lessons accompanied by fortnightly resource classes. The expectation is that teachers listen to the daily program and regularly attend resource classes where they would supposedly be discussing the problems encountered while listening to the broadcast programs. However, the worst thing that is happening in this training program is that teachers are not listening to the radio at all. (Conversation on February 13, 1993)

> P. The total time that teachers get to learn in the Radio-based BTT program is 150 hours [as laid out by the program authority]. This time is nowhere near that available for teachers in the former 10-month training program. We know that all the 150 hours of the Program have not been utilized by teachers as most of them do not listen the 20-minute daily broadcasts [the total of 80 hours]. (Conversation on February 27, 1993)

In all the seven resource classes which I attended at Prakash's centre virtually no discussion was focused on the radio program per se. On one occasion Prakash asked the participants whether they were listening the radio programs. I specifically took notes about this question in my journal.

> Today's resource class was started with a general question posed by Prakash about the extent to which the teachers have been listening to the broadcast lessons. No one replied to this particular question. Instead, one of the participants asked an unrelated question (the question was "what is a geoboard?") to him which distracted Prakash from continuing the talk about the radio program. . . . The original question, how many lessons had the teachers listened, was not asked again. Perhaps, Prakash did not want to create an embarrassing situation assuming that the participants would not care to listen to the broadcast programs. Later I raised this point in my conversation with Lalit. He told me that he had not listened to a single radio program in the past two weeks. Nor would any of the others. "That was why no one talked about the broadcast," he said. (My journal entry December 26, 1992)

Keeping in view the participants' state of mind, both Bhagvat and Prakash suggested that the program should have been structured in such a way that participants

would be indirectly motivated. They were of the view that the freedom given to teachers in making the choice between listening and not listening to the broadcast lessons was not really a good strategy. The program could have incorporated some technical solutions to this problem such as adopting some mechanism that might have ensured participants' regular attention to the radio programs.

> B. If the radio education program was to run more effectively then it should be made mandatory that teachers prepare weekly reports indicating every detail, the things they liked and disliked, the problems they encountered. Each teacher must present an individual report. . . . This will obligate them to listen to the radio program regularly and they will be indirectly learning although they are reluctant to learn voluntarily. Such an obligation may trigger their interests and they may eventually become enthusiastic to learn more. (Conversation on November 24, 1992)

According to Bhagvat the program appeared to be lacking proper organization and firm structure in tackling the problem of the inefficient use of the radio program by the participants. The participants were not under any obligation to listen to the radio programs.

> B. There is no mechanism to keep track of how teachers were listening to the radio lessons. In the resource classes they do not come up with any problem not because there is none but because they are not compelled to listen to the program. (Conversation on November 24, 1992)

Bhagvat thought that Nepalese primary teachers were not used to being self-motivated in a program like this and it was a gross mistake to totally leave the matter of radio-listening up to participants' own consciences with no checking mechanism. Prakash complained that the organizers of the radio-based BTT program did not make it explicit as to how the resource teacher could ensure that teachers listened to the radio programs. We continued talking about and clarifying this topic in our third conversation.

> R. Keeping in view the seriousness of the problem the organizers of the radio-based BTT program should have shown their concerns whether participants listened to radio or not.
>
> P. No they have not shown any concern in this regard. The other thing is that resource teachers too do not show much concern in this regard. Why should they when they do not have any clear direction from the authority about how to ensure this? There is no special strategy for evaluating the extent to which participants have listened to the radio program. It does not matter whether or not they listen to the radio. Listening to the radio has become an optional matter for them. (Conversation on February 27, 1993)

Prakash and Bhagvat observed that because of lack of dignity and social prestige for primary teachers, the profession would merely be used as a springboard to other "better" jobs, particularly in government offices and corporations. Because of such a status, most of them would often be preoccupied with professional discontentment.

Teachers with such a preoccupation would not listen to the radio programs and learn from them unless they were indirectly motivated.

Ensuring the participants' regular presence at the resource classes had been less of a problem compared to ensuring regular listening to radio. While teachers did not have to present any evidence that they listened to the radio broadcasts at home, they could not be absent in resource classes more than three times. But the resource classes covered only seventy out of a total of 150 hours of instruction structured in the radio-based BTT program; the radio lessons took the major share of eighty hours. The expectation that the two sources of learning would complement one another was not fulfilled.

> B. The resource classes have a very little connection with the broadcast programs. It seems to me that the resource classes are conducted like a separate teacher training program within the 150-hour framework of the radio-based BTT program. (Conversation on January 18, 1993)

Bhagvat and Prakash strongly felt that without listening to the radio lessons regularly participants would not take the advantage of learning from the total package of the 150-hour instruction. According to Bhagvat, as a means to indirectly motivating teachers to listen to the radio programs they could be asked to submit periodical reports about specific radio programs in the form of answers to a set of structured questions.

Prakash and Bhagvat believed that the strategy of indirect motivation could work even for the professionally discontent participants.

> R. Did the participation of the disinterested teachers have a negative effect in the resource classes?
>
> P. No it didn't. Rather they are compelled to do something. For example, I ask them to come to class with teaching materials which they should make at home. Once they are engaged in such activities they develop a sense of competition. This was what I found in the last year's group. In resource classes they have a definite amount of assignments to hand in. They must be present in at least 7 resource classes out of the total of 10. So, there are certain rules by which they have to live in the resource classes. No matter how disinterested the teachers were they must do the assignments and be present in the classes. Through such indirect means they would learn some thing. (Conversation on December 19, 1992)

> R. What about those individuals who do not want to continue being teachers? As you said they don't show interest yet they are required to participate in the program simply to continue teaching until they find another job. What do you think about this situation?
>
> B. This is a situation where the method of indirect motivation works. As well, someone participating only to be eligible for an extra allowance can also be put through this process of indirect motivation. He will be

compelled to listen and continue to do well as long as he remains a teacher. This is what I think. (Conversation on November 24, 1992)

The nature of the program alone cannot be blamed for the problem of participants' lack of interest in the program. What did the teachers think of the profession itself before they even became the participants of the program? According to Prakash and Bhagvat the general primary teachers' status in society had never been very encouraging. This was what they had experienced in their teaching life of over 20 years. It was not surprising for them that most of the primary teachers were simply lingering in the profession until they found more enticing jobs.

R. How is the teaching profession looked upon in your community?

P. Some people in the community think that teachers chose the profession only because they couldn't find any other job. More so against primary teachers. But also some secondary school teachers are that type. In my own school there are several young teachers many of whom will not want to stay teachers for a long time. Most of them may not have any other choice. Those who cannot afford to leave home want to remain a teacher. For them there is no other alternative.

R. Does that mean teachers don't have the social status that they deserve?

P. No, teachers are not dignified individuals in society. . . . The father of one of my colleagues used to say that teaching profession is "*teachere jagir.*" For him "teacher" symbolized the least preferred profession. Many people used to agree with him. (Conversation on December 19, 1992)

B. This is the profession which most of the people who barely passed the SLC examination choose as the starting job. They hang on to it until they get a better one. Some have become teachers to be able to stay close to home so that their family business or farming is not hampered. (Conversation on December 28, 1992)

According to the resource teachers, those were some of the social and psychological problems that the teachers would generally have even before they participated in the radio-based BTT program. Therefore, motivating such teachers to listen to the radio lessons could not have been an easy task. The organizers of the program failed to show any sense of responsibility towards understanding such problems of the participants. Perhaps, the bureaucratic structure within the program office was such that the organizers' hands were tied when it came to extending sensitivity towards the participants. If such was the case, then as Bhagvat and Prakash suggested, the program could have been structured in such a way that the participants were indirectly motivated. For Prakash and Bhagvat, such an indirect motivation could not be derogative to teachers' other productive activities. With the

implementation of an appropriate technique, participants could be encouraged to listen to the radio programs. Without the participants' motivation to listen to the radio lessons, the program could not be a significant source of learning for the participants. The resource teachers were skeptical that it could ever help teachers improve their teaching practices.

> P. In my opinion, the one-day in a month training [with the exception of the broadcast-lessons] could not contribute to teachers developing satisfactory teaching skills. The ten-month program which used to be provided to teachers was better in that they could learn a lot of things. In this one, on the other hand, . . . it is not even mandatory that every participant listen to the radio program. The expectation that teachers become capable of meeting the curricular objectives cannot be fulfilled with the help of this program alone. (Conversation on December 19, 1992)

Lack of motivation was a general problem which both Bhagvat and Prakash faced in their resource classes. It was not simple for them to find the answer to the question "Why teachers were not self-motivated?" After all, the program was developed with the sole purpose of helping them become competent teachers. Yet, why should they avoid listening to the radio lessons? However, the two resource teachers felt that it was not that simple to help them. The preoccupations with which teachers presented themselves in the program could have a serious effect on their level of motivation. But there were reasons as to why they were so preoccupied. An understanding of teachers' situations would make one realize that they deserved compassionate and sensitive considerations for the way they participated in the program. But other more "important" curricular issues supersede the issue of compassion and sensitivity. As the teacher educators appointed by the program, Prakash and Bhagvat were bound to be objective in helping the participants with the content of the program. So, they were particularly concerned about the extent to which teachers took advantage of the training program. Naturally, it would bother them when teachers lost interest and did not listen to the radio program. Techniques would therefore be required in such a situation for the purpose of indirectly motivating the preoccupied teachers so as to encourage them to take maximum advantage of the program.

Theme two: Technique to establish relationships with children. This theme pertains exclusively to a topic on pedagogical relationships that Prakash and I discussed in our conversations. One apparent weakness that Prakash found in the radio-based BTT program in its radio lessons and in the content for the resource classes, was how children should be understood. According to him, the program failed to provide any theoretical concept about such a knowledge for teachers who were participating in a training program for the first time in their teaching lives.

R. What role does training play in allowing teachers to understand children better? What would be the role of, say for example, the radio education program?

P. I don't believe that the radio program has helped teachers with such type of understanding about students. . . . In a separate 10-month [residential] training program, concepts of child psychology were included which allowed teachers to be familiar with the theoretical aspect of understanding children's behaviors. But in this program nothing of that sort is included. (Conversation on December 19, 1992)

Prakash indicated that an exposure to some theoretical concepts of child psychology could provide the young teachers coming to his resource classes some ideas that might help them establish desirable relationships with students. His emphasis on such technique was related to his perceptions about the young and beginning teachers he had encountered as well as to his own teaching life. He firmly believed that a caring relationship must be ensured by teachers for better student learning.

P. While some teachers treat children just like their own sons and daughters others try to be so strict that they would like to see kids trembling with fear as soon as they see the teacher. The amount of learning that could take place by teaching children with care and love would indeed be a lot more than what they would learn out of fear of teachers.

. . . a teacher may be well informed in a particular subject matter but that does not guarantee that he or she can teach the subject effectively in a classroom situation. No matter how good you are in your subject when it comes to teaching the relationship you establish with students becomes crucial. (Conversation on December 19, 1992)

However, technical means alone was not going to make a sensitive and thoughtful pedagogue. In Prakash's view, although the new primary teachers could benefit from learning about sound pedagogical relationships, it is their own efforts that make it happen in reality. As a teacher becomes experienced and reflective of his or her own practices then he or she can experience the growth of such relationships with children.

P. Teachers change their views about student-teacher relationships as they become experienced. I myself used to think that corporal punishment works for an effective learning. But now I do not favour such a view. Therefore, there occurs changes in teachers' thinking and attitude as they gain experiences. (Conversation on December 19, 1992)

P. Teachers tend to know the learning capacity of children once teachers become experienced. As a teacher daily confronts students of different natures in and around the classroom he or she will have opportunities to know the students better every moment. However, although this could be one way of becoming knowledgeable about child psychology, the beginning teachers and those participating in primary teacher training

program may find some theoretical knowledge on the topic as being a useful foundation. (Conversation on February 27, 1993)

Prakash specifically emphasized that inexperienced teachers or those who never had training must receive technical information about pedagogy. Although he accepted that teachers would be learning about children along with their experiences, it could be too damaging for small children of primary grades to have confronted teachers without any pedagogical sensitivity. As he mentioned earlier, he had seen teachers who liked to see children "tremble" with fear when they confronted them. Such teachers, according to him, would not have the concept of "child psychology." So, this is one area in which the program could have helped teachers.

P. In the "Magazine Show" segment of the radio programs, topics related to improving teachers' knowledge of child psychology could be included. (Conversation on December 17, 1992)

Prakash also indicated that the technical information on pedagogy could also be enriched by accommodating some of the experiential knowledge of practitioners as theory to learn from. Prakash's own experience of how he came to realize his pedagogical responsibility could be an example serving this purpose.

P. I have had an experience of coming into contact with the children who, because of their delinquent behavior, were being physically punished over and over again. I have learned from such children that if you treat them with love and care, instead of sticking to corporal punishments, you can see positive changes in their behavior. (Conversation on February 13, 1993)

His emphasis on the pedagogical sensitivity as a desirable characteristic of teachers became more prominent when he started equating maternity, nurturing, and child rearing with teaching. In making this connection he also provided a critique of the patriarchal view dominating the Nepalese school systems.

P. Comparatively, female teachers' knowledge of practical child psychology is better than male's. Therefore, female teachers can have better [pedagogical] relationships with children than male. . . . In our society child nurturing is an exclusive responsibility of mother. Father is not obliged to take that responsibility. Therefore, he cannot be as skilled as mother. But it does not mean that men cannot become as competent as women. All we have lacked is the same type of practice as women.

R. I guess nurturing children involves having a good sense of feeling towards children. It is definitely not confined to managing the child's atmosphere for his or her appropriate physical growth. Do you see this sort of feeling lacking among primary teachers?

P. Pedagogical sensitivity is more apparent among female teachers than male. Women are more sensitive in handling children than men. For

> this reason I feel that if we had more female teachers in primary schools children would have been in better hands as they become engaged in their learning process. But unfortunately we have an insignificant number of female teachers in Nepal. (Conversation on February 27, 1993)

I was convinced that Prakash was concerned about the chances that primary children could be in the hands of ignorant teachers. But he also felt that they too could become pedagogically sensitive if they had the opportunities to learn either from others' experiences or from some established theories of pedagogy. I found that he was basically trying to make the point that pedagogical knowledge as technique and as experience could be utilized for improved teaching practices. Unfortunately, he could not find this aspect addressed in the radio-based BTT program.

The Meaning Related to Situational Concerns

Theme three: Implementing the program in isolation. A prime topic of discussion with Bhagvat and Prakash was about the extent to which the radio-based BTT program organizers maintained their links or connections with the individuals implementing the program. Both of them indicated that they had had an unfortunate experience where the program organizers never showed any interest in establishing a compassionate relationship with the resource teachers. Their experiences of working for the program and as regular classroom teachers were left unshared with the organizers. Bhagvat and Prakash worked for the program literally as the resource teachers without it being understood how they assumed their responsibilities because they were implementing the program separate from those who developed and organized it. What did it mean for Prakash and Bhagvat to work on their own without being contacted by the program personnel? Did it mean that the authorities trusted the resource teachers as being capable of carrying out their responsibilities independently? Did the resource teachers believe that they were being trusted?

The resource teachers were of the impression that the personnel at the program office were not too keen to know how the program was being implemented at the field level. Still, Prakash and Bhagvat were not sure that they were being trusted by the organizers that the program would be effectively implemented. The resource teachers believed that the authorities had a clear idea about the complex nature of the problems that practitioners had encountered while implementing the program. But instead of accepting this reality and working together with the practitioners in finding out possibilities, the authorities tend to turn their back on the problems. It could be understood from Bhagvat and Prakash's expressions that by merely asking them to implement the program the

organizers "threw the ball into the practitioners' court" and hardly bothered to find out how the program was running.

> R. Did you have meetings and discussions with the experts working for the program?
>
> P. The program was not of that type. Nor did we have any personal level contacts with the experts. They never organized any such get-together. The so called orientation program was organized for one day only which no longer took place this year. You might take personal initiatives to visit the program office but they didn't try to come here. Last year one staff had come to observe my classroom, but stayed only for a short while and left. So, if you ran into any problem you must take personal initiative to go to the centre. (Conversation on December 19, 1992)

Bhagvat recalled his bitter experience with which he started his responsibility of conducting his first and last resource classes of 1991/92 session.

> B. The introductory session which I attended was very brief. The experts who came to conduct the session did not seem to demonstrate the kind of seriousness that they should have in making the session useful and informative for the resource teachers. I was very unsatisfied with the way it was conducted. On the very first day I had a bitter impression about the program and its organizers. (Conversation on November 24, 1992)

In over 20 years as teachers, Prakash and Bhagvat had seen many other projects and so called innovative programs implemented and terminated. Therefore, it was not difficult for them to recognize the mistakes that were made in the previous programs being repeated in the radio-based BTT program too. As the individuals implementing the radio program, they had the experiences of being bounced and bumped by situational problems because they were the ones who made the attempts to transfer the packaged knowledge of the program among the other practitioners. The extent of the damage that might have been made by the bouncing and bumping could not be experienced better by anyone other than the practitioners themselves. But the mistake that had been made in the radio program was that their experiences of living with the situational problems were not acknowledged as valuable information for improving the program. As Prakash mentioned the interest to keep in touch with the program office and informing the organizers of his experiences was his alone. But what about the responsibility of the office personnel towards him?

> P. They too should have attempted to keep in touch with us whereby we could have discussed our experiences and learned from each other. Last year, a one-day get-together program was organized prior to beginning of the session. The experts had come to suggest how the nine resource classes should be conducted. But this year, even that did not take place. Instead, we were asked to contact the District Education Office. I had some concerns based on my last year's experiences that I wanted to talk

> about with the program organizers. I have not been able to see any of them so far. (Conversation on December 19, 1992)

The resource teachers seemed to have the view that without a close relationship between the practitioners and program organizers the program could hardly be improved to suit the needs of improving practices at schools. Bhagvat's experience of teaching one session of the resource classes revealed the extent of difficulty that the participants of his resource centre faced in transferring the skills learned into reality.

> B. Most of the teachers became disappointed with the sort of environment they had at their schools and felt that they could not apply the skills they learned. . . . The level of motivation among the participants in my group was not satisfactory. Eventually their participation was nothing more than earning the diploma and be eligible for the extra allowance. (Conversation on December 28, 1992)

Apparently the participants were finding it difficult to identify with the program. Why should they find a systematically planned and organized program difficult to identify with? The resource teachers indicated that teachers' overall conditions determined how they situated themselves in the nine-month long radio-based training program. The resource teachers—because of their immediate contacts with the participants—had to play a more sensitive role than the organizers of the program. Prakash and Bhagvat indicated that they were sensitive to the participants' conditions and tried to understand them as deeply as possible.

> B. I tried to keep in mind the difficult conditions in which teachers had to work. . . . The teaching methods which I taught them and also those broadcast in the radio could theoretically be correct but might not be applicable in actual situations. There were teachers who taught classes under a tree. . . . So, they might have to forget about the methods learned and do what they find convenient. But, knowledge about various methods of teaching might allow them to make some possible modifications towards improving teaching. (Conversation on January 18, 1993)

Becoming sensitive to the reality of the participants but being left alone to work with them, the resource teachers felt contempt for how the program was being implemented. In their voices it came clear to me that they were having a hard time trusting the program authorities. Prakash explained how they tended to ignore the reality of the participants and tried to simply maintain the objective purposes of the program.

> P. Last year they failed half of my participants [in the final examination that the Program conducted]. I just don't have any idea on what basis they do that. My conscience does not allow me to fail any participant. . . . I have no faith in their evaluation system. I could not believe when they failed one of my best students. I had met him a few days ago and I didn't have anything to say to him except to be sad. He was definitely a

> very hard working, dedicated and above the average participant. (Conversation on February 27, 1993)

Because of their intimacy with the participants the resource teachers had the wisdom to act sensitively with them in the resource classes. While being guided by such wisdom they also were mindful of their role as the resource teachers. They had with them a technically prepared curriculum to implement. In assuming the responsibilities they, therefore, found themselves at a very difficult place created by the two extreme phenomena of situationally affected participants and the technically oriented curriculum of the program. But no matter how difficult such a place was, they accepted it and tried to live through it. Unfortunately whatever they were learning through such a phenomenal experience they were doing so in isolation from the program organizers. Although, they wanted to share the experience and support the process, if any, of improving the program the organizers were not available. They did not have their doors open for the practitioners.

The Meaning Related to Critical Concerns

Theme four: The radio-based BTT program as an innovation operating with the predominant interests of "intellectual-elites." For Bhagvat and Prakash the program was like many other innovations which sprouted out of the ideas floated by some handful of intellectuals at the policy level. The resource teachers were not sure to what extent the public interests had been acknowledged when the intellectuals put together their ideas for different innovative programs for educational development. The felt that intellectuals holding important government positions owned the innovations, and that teachers engaged in situational practices would have to implement them as given.

> B. What is happening in the name of educational development is that varieties of programs are being conceived, developed, and implemented at the policy level because of the aid money pouring in from international agencies. Such an approach is having a negative rather than positive influence on teachers. (Conversation on January 18, 1993)

The resource teachers could not have any different perception about the radio-base BTT program as it did not provide them with any evidence that made them believe that practitioners had a say in planning and implementing the program. For them, control over the program had been maintained by those intellectual-elites.

As they understood it, the program's main intent was to provide training to teachers so that they could "effectively" implement the primary curriculum. But they were not sure if the participation in the radio program alone would make the teachers capable of fulfilling the curricular demands. It was largely due to the curricular issues that the effectiveness of the program was at stake. But the program seemed to assume that challenging the

curriculum was beyond the scope of the program and as such Prakash and Bhagvat were not authorized to initiate discussions on curricular issues. Because of this they thought the participants could not identify themselves with the program. While the curriculum was an abstract concept not subject to critical understanding, it had been used as the foundation upon which all the activities of the program were constructed. The resource teachers, therefore, anticipated that teachers' participation in the program would most likely be superficial.

> P. Most of the teachers are attending the program without any interest. Typically, the school headmaster, following the direction of the district education authority, appoints teachers to attend to the program. For them, the training simply means to be eligible for the extra allowance of Rs. 45 [approximately $1] in their monthly salaries. The participation in the program is more of the fulfillment of the bureaucratic formalities than professional development. (Conversation on December 19, 1992)

The other apparent reason why the radio-based BTT program disregarded critical discussions on curricular issues was because of the fact that the program itself evolved within the larger framework of the existing educational system. This being the case, it could only urge its participants and resource teachers to submit to the curriculum as given. It was therefore clear that one of the underlying assumptions of the program was that the practitioners were simply responsible to implement the curriculum as prescribed but not to evaluate it. The role of resource teachers as stated in the Directives for Resource Teachers and Participants of the program confirms such an assumption of the program. It reads like this:

> The resource teacher must conduct two resource classes every month and each resource class must be conducted for at least 4 hours. The 12 resource classes that will be conducted in one session should be carried out according to the schedule given in page 5.
>
> In the beginning of each resource class questions and problems raised by participants about the broadcast lessons over the past month should be discussed. Besides this, [typical] practical-session-activities such as development of lesson plan, development of evaluation tools, development of educational materials and their use, teaching of demonstration class, practice teaching, and extra-curricular activities should also be carried out under the resource classes. The specific details of what activities should be accomplished in each resource class is presented in the schedule. (RETTP, 1992, p. 1, my translation of the original Nepali version)

Bhagvat and Prakash, not to mention the participants of the program, never had any opportunity—neither in this program nor in any other—to talk about the process of curriculum development. Obviously, they did not have any idea as to how important decisions were made about curriculum development and implementation. It was surprising

to know that even after teaching more than 20 years, the resource teachers were unaware of the process of curriculum development.

> R. Do you have any idea how the curriculum is developed?
>
> N. No. I have no idea. I have not been invited in such an activity in the past 22 years. . . . I also could have made some contributions out of what I have learned from my experiences. . . . But, so far no one has come to ask for my help nor do I know where I should approach to make such contributions. . . . I simply have been involved in teaching. We simply have to implement the curriculum. Whatever they want us to teach we do so. (Conversation on December 19, 1992)

In the past 25 years of teaching Bhagvat had seen many changes in the curriculum including the major change in 1971 when the National Educational System Plan (NESP) was implemented. But in his assessment, the changes had more negative than positive effects on the quality of education. He found numerous inconsistencies and flaws in the curriculum but had never been able to convey his concerns to the concerned authorities. He mentioned one specific example of such inconsistencies.

> B. Some of the topics included in one subject contradict with a similar topic dealt in another subject. For example, in the textbook of moral education the concept of earth has been presented on the basis of the Hindu mythology that one particular creature has balanced the earth on its shoulder. The same concept is presented scientifically in the textbook of geography. I learned this from my own son who being confused had come to asked me which one he should believe. I told him that the truth is the one mentioned in the geography book and the other one is just a religious belief. It bothers me why the curriculum developers do not give any attention to such a sensitive matter. I wonder, how other teachers would react to the question that my son asked me. (Conversation on December 28, 1992)

What did it mean for the resource teachers to work for the program? They had no idea how the program came into existence. They had to carry out its mandated activities although they did not make much sense to the participants. They found the curriculum problematic but were unable to discuss the issues either with the authorities or the participants. Although being aware of the problems that the overall educational system created in their daily life of teaching and learning, they could not be instrumental in shaping education according to their own needs. The radio program on the other hand, endorsed the existing paradigm. Had the program come as a critique of the paradigm, it would have made more sense to the resource teachers and in turn to the participants. Unfortunately, as with many other innovations, this program too served the interests of the handful of intellectual-elites and paid no attention to the interests of the Nepalese society at large.

Meaning of the Radio-based BTT Program for the Evaluation Consultant

Teacher Educator Dev

His Background

Dev is an American university graduate who has many years' experience in the field of teacher education, research, and innovative educational programs. He is a full-time professor in the Faculty of Education, Tribhuvan University. In 1984, Dev took a part-time position in the Radio Education Teacher Training (RETT) project as a consultant in research and evaluation.

Among his many projects and innovations, the RETT project was Dev's one main interest. From the very beginning he had made significant contributions in helping some of the staff develop skills to evaluate the project activities and to eventually establish an evaluation unit within its structure. In response to my curiosity about his role in the RETT project he explained:

> D. My role was related to evaluation. It was to introduce the concept of evaluation within the [Radio Education] system and to train . . . [the professional staff of the Radio Education project] how to upgrade the system and what role does evaluation play for this purpose. That was the main work. (Conversation on November 28, 1992)

Dev was one of the key personnel involved in the preliminary survey of the potential participants of the Radio Tuition program of the RETT project in 1984, which marked the beginning of the second phase of the project. The following year, as the program was implemented, his contributions became more significant. He attempted to establish an evaluation system within the RETT project office, became personally involved in conducting formative and summative evaluations, constantly monitored the program activities at the field level, and kept contact with personnel at the policy level. He was involved generally in providing research-based feedback to the concerned project staff responsible for developing the course materials and producing broadcast lessons. He continued with the same responsibility even when the RETT project shifted its focus (from the Radio Tuition and the Under-SLC Teacher Training programs) towards supporting the national teacher training activities by starting to provide the Basic Teacher Training (BTT) program to teachers in 1987. His service was completed in September 1990 when total responsibility for the RETT project was in the hands of the Ministry of Education, with no further assistance from USAID.

The Meaning of Working in the Radio-Based BTT Program

Between November 28, 1992, and February 12, 1993, I had three conversations with Dev. All the three times we met at his residence. Each of the conversations lasted about one and a half hours.

Dev and I came to know each other in 1984 when we both started working with the evaluation activities of the Radio Tuition program of the RETT project. My prior introduction to him, along with the project itself, brought some animation to our conversations. In many instances I could bring to mind some of the experiences that I had had with the project that were related to what he was talking about.

Our conversations helped me re-live some of my own experiences and also develop a better understanding of Dev and his world view. After we had the three conversations, my prior understanding about him changed drastically. Soon after we had our first conversation, I began to notice my naiveté. In my journal entry on that day I mentioned my changing perspective about him.

> Although I have known Dev for so many years, today's conversation gave me an opportunity to understand him from a different perspective. Perhaps, by paying sensitive attention to what he had to say I came to know him better than I ever knew him before.
>
> When we both worked for R.T. [Radio Tuition] program, I used to think that his assistance to the R.T. evaluation team was as superficial as was mine and other colleagues'. Although I used to appreciate the way he dedicated himself to the activities of the R.T. program, deep inside I used to feel that his efforts were of insignificant value in solving the problems of primary teacher training. I used to think that much of what we did for the project were superficial. But, today's conversation revealed some very important aspects of those activities, particularly those of Dev's. He convinced me that he was successful in finding a place amidst the complex context in which the RETT project operated. (My journal entry on November 28, 1992)

In all three conversations, Dev and I probed deeply into the burning problems of primary teacher training and what role the current radio-based BTT program played in addressing those problems. He was explicit and had recurrently mentioned that like the former two programs (the Radio Tuition and the Under-SLC Teacher Training programs) the current BTT program too did not make any significant contribution in the field of primary teacher training mostly because of lack of firm policies on the part of the government. The interesting point that he mentioned to me was that even after being sure that his efforts would merely prove superficial he preferred to continue striving to make the current program work for the participants. It is in this sense that I began to see some connection between the notion of participation and distanciation that Ricoeur (1981) talks about, and the kind of practices that Dev was involved in not only as an evaluator and

consultant of the RETT project but also as a sensible teacher educator who had lived through the complex educational context of the country for many years.

The Meaning Related to Technical Concerns

Dev and I talked about many topics related to the technical evaluation concerns. They ranged from specific issues related to perceptions and practices of evaluations among officials of the radio-based BTT program to general theories and models that inspired the development of Nepalese primary teacher education programs.

Keeping in view the "chaotic" conditions that the primary teacher training educators had to face, Dev felt a need for concrete guidelines and terms of reference for practitioners so that everyone is serious in fulfilling professional responsibilities. In order to come up with such guidelines, the higher officials of the government would first of all have to discipline themselves and show a reasonable degree of commitment towards their own responsibilities. The following theme was the result of the effort we made in understanding the problem of the "chaotic" educational conditions resulting from technical deficiencies of the government policies.

Theme one: Lack of technically sound policies and terms of reference for practitioners. Dev thought that the policies of the Nepalese educational system were unrealistic and hindered an effective implementation of innovations like the radio-based BTT program. He believed that policies must be developed and refined with an understanding of a total national context. While the policies should provide clear guidelines for practitioners in assuming their responsibilities, the system must also make sure that each practitioner meets the requirements specified in the policies. But, in Dev's experience, because of lack of firm and realistic policies, the program could not be implemented in the manner it should have. The conditions created due to such policies had a damaging effect particularly on the working spirit of the technical staff of the program.

In trying to develop an integrated system of evaluation within the RETT project activities he had difficulty ensuring the commitment of the technical staff. He found that they had a perception that evaluation activities were the exclusive responsibility of an evaluator.

> D. The term evaluation is understood in a very narrow sense. The general perception in the RETT project office was that an evaluator should be exclusively responsible for all the evaluation activities. . . . But the evaluator alone should not be relied on for evaluation. Everyone should take an interest in evaluation. . . . For example, in the case of recording the broadcast lessons, the technician himself should take initiatives to evaluate the process and product of the recording activities in order for

> him to bring meaningful improvement in his future activities. . . . So, I emphasized that everyone in the RETT project office should be interested in evaluation of his or her own activities. (Conversation on November 28, 1992)

In Dev's view, the curriculum materials developed for the radio program required regular improvements. Each individual who developed the materials should be responsible for carrying out the tasks of research and evaluation specific to his or her own products. According to Dev, although scriptwriters accepted to write and modify the scripts, they presumed that their responsibilities would never involve the research and evaluation work. The "non-research staff" considered that taking initiatives towards the evaluation of their own activities were an extra burden. Dev said that they were of the view that those activities should have been the responsibilities of the individuals hired for the purpose who, after carrying out necessary research and evaluation, should provide the curriculum writers with necessary information for improving the materials.

> D. "As a script writer I have nothing to do with evaluation. So, if the evaluator provided me with information I would use them in improving the material I developed." This was the type of attitude they had. I could understand why they had such an attitude. They did not have a clear job description and terms of reference. (Conversation on January 6, 1993)

The problem, as Dev felt, was rooted to the policies of the government. According to him, the policies were such that the staff would not be notified about their responsibilities with a clear job description.

> D. Nobody seems to take responsibility for his or her own work. Typically, everyone tends to put away his or her responsibility and works merely to comply with the orders of senior staff.
>
> R. Does that mean there is no effort on the part of the professionals to improve one's own practice?
>
> D. No, absolutely none. In my experience I have not seen such a practice. This is why my emphasis has always been on job description. Whenever anyone is hired it should be clear what the individual is hired for. This has to be specifically mentioned [in the terms of reference] and understood by the individual. (Conversation on February 12, 1993)

The positions for which the staff were hired were presumed sufficient for them to figure out the nature and scope of their responsibilities. Dev found that the practice of formulating policies lacked a technically sound approach, which created a "chaotic" situation for practitioners at their respective work-places. He was implying that the technically sound approach to formulating government policies would involve an in-depth study of the national context so that the policies made were realistic and manageable for practitioners.

The hiring policies of the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) provided the basis for hiring the professional staff of the RETT project. In Dev's judgment the hiring policies of the MOEC were vague and did not make explicit the details of the roles and responsibilities of the successful candidates. The authority responsible to define the job of a scriptwriter, for example, did not seem to have a clear knowledge of the nature of activities that the candidate must perform. This occurred, Dev believed, in almost every level of the bureaucratic hierarchy.

While the project office staff did not have a clear direction regarding their roles and responsibilities, neither was there a clear government policy about the training requirement for teachers. Therefore, the value of training was uncertain. As Dev mentioned, participants of the radio-based BTT program were not very keen to be attentive to the broadcast lessons because of the lack of meaningful benefits of the training program. Training was not a required condition to become a teacher nor was there any significant salary difference between a trained and an untrained teacher. Why then would teacher be keen to be an active participant of the program?

> D. I don't know whether to call it the negligence of the teachers that they tended to avoid listening to the broadcast lessons for the sake of other mundane activities. They took it easy. "What's the big deal about the program? If I missed some lessons I could always make up from the Self-Instruction Materials." . . . The training could not be effective because of such trend. They should have been discouraged from avoiding to listen to the radio lessons. But just because we wanted that it was not going to happen. There had to be a policy. There was a weakness on the part of the government's policy itself. What did the government do to let teachers feel that training was important? Training was not a necessary condition to become a teacher. Why then should one be attentive to any training program? It was only a matter of Rs. 45 [about $1] that will be increased in their monthly salaries. One could earn that amount in less than a couple of hours. (Conversation on January 6, 1993)

Dev strongly contended that the implications of technically unsound policies were not being foreseen by the MOEC officials. At the local level some of the crucial activities related to the implementation of the radio-based BTT program were not carried out as those activities became the responsibility of the local authority of HMG (His Majesty's Government). For example, the monitoring activities at the field level were actively carried out as long as the program was a joint project of HMG and USAID. But as soon as the project was terminated, the responsibility became HMG's own which, according to Dev, was beyond its capacity to fulfill. For example, the communications with participants through correspondence that was integrated in the program during its developmental stage was not sustained.

R. Has the correspondence [with participants] been maintained currently?

D. Now the program is no longer a project. It has become a part of the government's regular program. Correspondence with teachers must have stopped now. All those activities were developed during the project period. But soon after the government took over many factors would start playing roles. The budget went down immediately. The priority might have been given to some other aspect. The correspondence with teachers could not be sustained. The program has now become a ritual. The program office is simply recycling the broadcast materials developed during the project period without any changes.

R. If the teachers' letters were to be responded to some work would be needed on the part of the organizers.

D. Yes. They would have to work more, sort-out the letters and respond to them, incorporate them in the lessons, do re-recording and so on. All these activities need budget and personnel. (Conversation on January 6, 1993)

Dev emphasized that constant monitoring of the field level activities was another important aspect of the program which the government should have maintained. He could not see why such activities could not be carried out by the government because the DEO (District Education Office) being the local education authority could have been instructed by the MOEC (Ministry of Education and Culture) to monitor the program activities.

R. The DEOs are established at the district level. Couldn't the government constantly monitor the program activities through them?

D. We have problems in our system. As I said there is no clear job description in any level of the government offices. So I don't want to blame the DEOs for their inability to properly function. What are the responsibilities of the DEOs? They are not explicit. A DEO is vaguely understood as a local organization responsible to carry out every educational activity mentioned in the government's plan. Now what does that mean? The radio-based BTT program as a part of the government program would have to be looked after by the concerned DEOs. So, they get instructions from the ministry of education. Similarly whenever there is any other government program they will be notified and instructed to do the necessary work. But the instructions would never be specific and precise. The limited resources of the DEOs would never be considered but work keeps piling up in these organizations. The MOEC shift their responsibilities to the DEOs without paying any attention to their capacity. (Conversation on January 6, 1993)

Dev asserted that a gross mistake had been made by the government at the very moment when it approved the implementation of the RETT project. Those who made the decision of implementing such a large undertaking did not take into consideration the

overall capacity of the government to be able to sustain the project in future. Dev wondered why the issue of sustenance was not considered while signing the project.

> D. I was of the opinion that the USAID must make arrangements for a revolving funds because the RETT project was not a kind of program that the government could have handled properly. . . . Now the situation is that the RETT office did not have a budget for repairing one of the computers which broke down some time ago. I doubt if it will ever get fixed. The building itself would be beyond the government's capacity to maintain. It consists of so many facilities. . . . When the project involved so much money why could not it have a revolving fund of say one or two million rupees? . . . Instead of merely listening to whatever the donor agency told, the government should have its own vision of the future. It should be explicit of its own capacity.
>
> The telephone system installed in the RETT office was the second of its type in Nepal. . . . My argument was that why do we need such a "white-elephant?" (Conversation on January 6, 1993)

Dev has made it clear that the current radio-based BTT program has encountered numerous problems. The problems have been attributed to lack of realistic and technically sound government policies as well as mechanisms to ensure that the practitioners' conduct complies with the policies. As a consultant for evaluation of the program, Dev takes on the responsibility of mobilizing the staff in improving the program so participants get maximum benefit. But his experiences have been full of negative encounters sparked primarily due to the flaws of government policies and practices. His six years' association with the RETT project made him aware of how a rationally planned and technically designed innovation gets sabotaged by irrational and unscientific policies of the government. He sees the means being inconsistent with the end that the educational planners and policy-makers have set in the form of the national educational goals.

The Meaning Related to Situational Concerns

The emphasis that Dev gave to the need for realistic and sound policies of government recurred several times in our conversations. As we pondered extensively into the policy connections of the program, questions related to the constraints of working under the current government policies, educational conditions of practitioners, and issues of curriculum unfolded. How do these three aspects affect the program? This question has been analyzed in the following theme.

Theme two: Structuring the program according to the national curriculum and being confronted by the constraints of implementation. A need for the radio-based BTT program to restrict its activities within the national teacher education curriculum was made clear by Dev in the beginning of our first conversation. Although he was cognizant of the problems

of curriculum implementation, he had to take it as the only set of guidelines in planning and initiating evaluative activities of the program. His response to my question about how the program has considered the educational needs of primary children, spurred a further probing into the issue of scope and limitations of the program.

> R. The ultimate beneficiaries of an innovation like the radio program should be the primary children. To what extent do you see this happening?
>
> D. The RETT project did not adopt any unique strategy of its own. It is a function of the teacher education policy of the government. So, its activities are carefully planned to comply with the policy. (Conversation on November 28, 1992)

The program's main objective was to teach its participants the "effective" way of delivering the primary curricula to children in their respective schools. So the questions we probed were the following: Was the curriculum itself a problem? Did the program achieve this goal? What were the problems faced in achieving this goal? And how were the situations where teachers would have to work?

Dev did not have any problem accepting the primary curriculum as given. The standard maintained in the curriculum might have been inappropriate for many rural children which, according to him, was an anticipated problem. In his view, the curriculum that was developed under the heavy influence of western philosophy must stick to its existing standard in order to prevent children from being isolated and left out of the international trends. Therefore, he did not think it was appropriate to link the curricular issue with the difficulties that the participants of the radio-based BTT program faced in making use of their knowledge in reality.

> R. As we dig through the problem [of implementation of the teaching skills learned in the program] the fundamental issue seems to be that of relevancy of our curriculum itself.
>
> D. It is not reasonable to say that the curriculum is not useful. The curriculum is good and useful. It is developed according to international trend. It is required of us to be able to fit into the international space. A curriculum developed exclusively for our conditions will not be useful because we won't be able to move forward. Argument such as "since we are still at a primitive stage we have to be provided with primitive tools," is not reasonable. Therefore, what I am trying to say is that we should also be able to stand on the international stage. (Conversation on November 28, 1992)

Dev contends that educational needs must not always be related to the local context. The standards and trends maintained in the international community cannot be ignored in developing national curriculum because the process of curriculum development cannot escape the pressure exerted at the national and international levels. Therefore, the content of the primary syllabus and teacher education programs could not be based solely on the

national context. But, as long as curriculum developers took into account the relevant studies conducted at the national as well as international level Dev did not have any complaint against the content selected for the curricula of primary and teacher education. However, he was not trying to conceal the problem that most of the Nepalese primary schools were lacking basic physical and human resource requirements needed to carry out the nationally prescribed curriculum. As he saw it, the problem was one of implementation and therefore should not be attributed to curriculum.

> D. We should primarily strengthen the implementation aspect. No matter how good the curriculum is, if the implementation is not proper then the curriculum does not make any sense. (Conversation on January 6, 1993)

Dev maintained that the participation in the radio-based BTT program must have had some sort of impact on the majority of the participants while for some it might have been a significant learning experience. However, the situations of schools were such that implementation of teaching skills learned might not be possible for many participants. So, even if the participation in the program might have broadened teachers' knowledge of teaching, they were not in a position to put the knowledge into practice.

> R. Has the program addressed the difficulties faced while implementing the program?
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> D. Well most of the difficulties faced were outside the scope of the program. It could not be possible to address all those difficulties. We talk about pedagogy. Now to implement the kind of pedagogy that we typically discuss in a teacher education program, there must be a definite kind of background and educational context at schools. If the school situations are not appropriate, what is the use of the pedagogy that we talk about in the training program? For example, if there is no classroom how could you use the method you know? If there is no blackboard what type of pedagogy should be used? (Conversation on January 6, 1993)

The problem of implementation was an aspect which Dev had always experienced while he still was actively working as the evaluation consultant of the RETT project. He had noticed that the radio-based BTT program by itself had a good effect on teachers as long as the organizers worked hand-in-hand with the participants. He indicated that one cannot expect the program to be a good learning experience for teachers without the necessary plans and actions on the part of the organizers. Keeping in touch with participants was a key factor of which they must be mindful. At many instances in our conversations, Dev made use of the term "constant monitoring" which basically meant being sensitive to how the participants were learning from the program. Explaining about the evaluation activities during the project period he said that changes and modifications

were made in the program strategies on the basis of information collected through such a process of constant monitoring. Moreover, participants were kept in touch through letter correspondence and periodical contact sessions. Dev contended that all those activities had a positive impact on teachers with respect to developing their personal competencies of teaching. However, the program could not do much in regards to the persistent problem of implementation. For example, in their letters to the RETT office the teachers used to complain about the difficulties of implementing some of the teaching methods in the teachers' lived context.

> D. Through the radio program . . . the theory of teaching methods are delivered. For example the message might be that students should not be treated harshly or punished inappropriately. . . . Teachers might run into a problem while trying to apply such a theory in the classroom. . . . The technique that is taught through radio is based on the assumption that there would be appropriate student-teacher ratio. Only in a classroom with a ratio of 1 to 20 or 22, the theory might be applicable. It might not be applicable in a class with a ratio of 1 to 60 which actually was the case in the classrooms of some of the participants who wrote to us. So, we sometime received letters that say "according to the radio instruction I tried not to punish children but I had problem controlling them. If I did not spank them the class would not be controlled." Therefore, in real situation there would be such a hidden curriculum which would not be addressed in the broadcasts. (Conversation on January 6, 1993)

One of the issues that came up in our conversations was the regional differences among the participants and the alternative approach that the radio-based BTT program could have taken to address the problem arising from this diversity. The government sets quotas for specific districts for teachers from those districts to participate in the program. So teachers from all over the country would be participating in the program.

> D. The government fixes the place and number of participants. We cannot decide where to implement the program. The government on the other hand spreads the quota all over the country. (Conversation on January 6, 1993)

Following the government policy the radio-based BTT program developed one set of training materials for all the participants spread across the country.

> D. How does a typical Nepali untrained primary teacher look like? That was what we looked for. And on the basis of the needs of a typical teacher the radio programs were developed and broadcast. (Conversation on January 6, 1993)

The program attempted to meet the training needs of general primary teachers with an assumption that all of them belong to one homogeneous group. Therefore, there was an expectation that its activities would meet every teacher's training needs. But as Dev said "by taking a general approach to meeting everybody's needs, it ended up meeting nobody's

needs" (conversation on January 6, 1993). Dev had opposed this general approach to training all the teachers with the same mechanism and had proposed an alternative.

> D. I always emphasized that we take one whole block at a time in which case the trainees would not have to be minority [in the real situation while finding themselves among other untrained teachers] and are unable to apply the skills learned in the program. Let us prepare all the teachers within that block. Then everyone is on the same boat. . . . Everyone would be speaking the same language because of the same [training] culture. Then teachers would not have to distinguish themselves as being trained or untrained. Everyone can identify with others. (Conversation on January 6, 1993)

But such a proposal did not interest the policy makers at the MOEC. In favoring the proposal he asserted that one would find a clear diversity on many aspects of teachers' lives as one travels from east to western part of the country.

> D. In order to meet the training policy of the government we must calculate the aggregate conditions of the untrained primary teachers. But the result was not going to be effective because the needs of [teachers from] Ilam and Bajura are not the same.[6] (Conversation on February 12, 1993)

While supporting the curricula of both teacher and primary education Dev finds himself caught between the rigid structure of the radio-based BTT program and the situation in which its participants are expected to implement their skills learned in the program. He supports the primary curriculum because it takes into consideration the educational trend developed internationally. He believes that an integration into the global trend is inevitable for our educational system because it cannot be possible for a country like Nepal to find a direction of its own in the process of the national development. In his view, the difficulties encountered in the implementation of the curriculum can gradually be overcome through pragmatic measures by first improving the basic conditions of schools. Although the training that the teachers received through the radio-based BTT program has

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[6]Ilam is an eastern district while Bajura lies at the far west. In terms of geographic distance the two districts are approximately 1000 kilometers apart separated literally by series of high mountains of Mahabharat range. Although Nepali is the predominant language in both the districts, people in Bajura have their own dialect. Dev expresses his concern about the difficulties arising from language difference as following.

> Some participants may find the language we used difficult to comprehend. The language could be common in Kathmandu because the writers are predominantly from Kathmandu or at least working in the capital city. We cannot take it for granted that that language was a typical Nepali language. It is very important to understand how the teachers from eastern and western part of the country comprehend the language. (Conversation on January 6, 1993)

not been of much value in terms of its practical use for implementing the curriculum, he believes that the training carries a useful message for teachers. Why the knowledge learned does not get transferred into practice is not the problem of the program nor of the primary curriculum. It is the problem of implementation due to government policies.

The Meaning Related to Critical Concerns

As we looked into teachers' problems of applying the knowledge learned in the radio-based BTT program, some of the underlying assumptions that shaped the activities of the program unfolded. As a spill over, our inquiry into the problem also brought to light some of the fundamental beliefs that informed the scheme of the general primary teacher education approach. Primarily, the process of critical questioning and disclosing hidden metaphors guiding the program activities clarified the extent to which Dev could make his contributions for the improvement of the program.

Theme three: Coping with the controlled structure of the bureaucracy. In many ways the activities of the program were informed by explicit and implicit bureaucratic instructions that also influenced Dev's plan of action for evaluating the program. The entire construct of the program was based on fundamental assumptions about the pre-knowledge of teachers and students, the structure of primary classrooms, resources and physical conditions of schools. In Dev's point of view the assumptions made were mostly incorrect and superficial. He was also of the belief that the officials of the MOEC too were aware of the incorrectness of the assumptions. Yet their tendency seemed to be to overlook the implications of the assumptions and instead legitimize the necessity of laying them out. By doing so, they could easily avoid the hard and bitter reality of the social context and could use innovations like the radio-based BTT program for administrative convenience.

To begin with, Dev mentioned what it might be like for untrained teachers to take training through the radio-based BTT program. The fundamental assumption behind providing training to teachers was that they would contribute to improving the quality of education. No one would possibly dispute this argument so long as other subtle issues were not taken into account.

> D. Well, all that the radio [program] does is transmit knowledge. A teacher is most likely to learn something in the training . . . because this teacher, who never took any training before, would now have gone through a ten-month special program. It's like saying that a hungry man's belly will be filled if he is allowed to eat. However, it is entirely a different matter whether the food consumed is digested or caused indigestion to the individual. Similarly, to what extent the training of teachers helped making schools a better place is entirely a different thing. (Conversation on November 28, 1992)

Clearly, the purpose of training is to qualify teachers with skills. But whether the skills learned are useful for improving practice has not been any concern of the training program. Dev was positive that the conditions at schools were not such that the skills could be used. He sounded quite aggressive when he said "what could be the use of the tool when it could not even be installed because of the inappropriate environment. The unused tool will eventually get rusted" (conversation on January 6, 1993). Despite such inconsistencies between skills learned by teachers and their reality, why have the officials of the MOEC not shown any serious effort in making training programs consistent with the school environments or vice versa?

Apparently, the subtle interest of the higher officials are concerns about meeting the planned objectives in terms of figures and quantity. Such an interest initiates more and more new teacher training modalities, but the initiations do not involve a critical analysis of the assumptions made. Currently, the prioritized aspect is universal primary education by 2000 which Dev mentioned:

> the government started showing a concern as to how the nation-wide demand of primary teachers can be fulfilled. How could this ever be fulfilled? It's impossible. So, the trick is to put teachers through the basic teacher training (BTT) and put a *tika* [stamp] of training on each participant. And perhaps on the basis of this it can be claimed that there are *enough* trained teachers in the country. Or else, I don't know why such a training program has been initiated. (Conversation on January 6, 1993, emphasis mine)

It was interesting to hear Dev metaphorically used the term *tika*. It is a Nepali word and has a religious and cultural connotation based on Hindu mythology. *Tika* is a colored mark worn on the forehead by devotees after paying homage to the divine god normally offered by the priest. *Tika* therefore symbolizes the divine blessings that protect the devotees from "evil" powers. It has a cultural meaning too. Whenever a cultural ritual is performed in a family, *tika* is offered with blessings by the eldest member to the younger ones and sometimes also to the other relatives. The ritual of putting *tika* reminds an individual of his or her relationship with the other individual. Offering *tika* sometime extends beyond family or relatives' circle to neighbor or friends' circle. As the circle gets bigger the political meaning of *tika* unfolds. Dev's use of the term signifies its political meaning and implies how the innovations like the radio-based BTT program become the symbolic *tika* offered by the authority with "blessings" and "protections" to teachers. He indicated that they would just have to submit to the authority by participating in the program for them to legitimize their practices and be protected from criticisms.

The other aspect Dev makes clear is that the training programs are driven by the interest of authorities in meeting the target of the quantitative requirement of teachers that

the country will need by the year 2000. In Dev's understanding, therefore, the seriousness of the problem of implementation has not been any issue of priority for the higher officials of the MOEC. However, he also had a sense of the paradoxical nature of the problem that the RETT project implementation faced during his tenure. He showed some degree of sympathy towards the bureaucrats by saying that they too were compelled and the decisions they make were often charged by political pressures. Now the people exerting such pressures on bureaucrats were the ones who the people themselves elected. Therefore, it is difficult for someone as conscientious as Dev to be definite about any one aspect of the social phenomena being responsible for the serious implementation problem of the radio-based BTT program.

> D. What are the priority areas? What are the political interests? All these factors count. As long as there are no political commitments nothing will work. Whatever sector is deemed necessary to be developed then there must be the political commitments to make it happen. Without political commitments no plan, no matter how good and financially backed up it is, will make any difference. So, no strategy will be effective unless there is a political interest. (Conversation on January 6, 1993)

Being cognizant of such a paradoxical nature of the problem, Dev tried to conduct himself with a good degree of sensitivity and tolerance as he worked along trying to come up with new ideas of evaluation or feedback for the improvement of the program. He knew how the system worked and what could happen if he could not be patient and tolerant. Such being the condition of the work-place, he conducted himself carefully but always looked for possibilities. He never stopped persuading the concerned officials of the MOEC for the role they could play in improving the program.

> R. How did you feel when you got entangled in the bureaucracy?
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> D. I used to see many problems. I used to face delays in getting my proposals approved. Most of them would never be approved. This sort of thing happens while working under the bureaucracy.
>
> R. How did you compromise with such situations?
>
> D. I had to put off many of my plans. I even threw away some of them. You must accept that such things are inevitable. Since you have no control over the bureaucratic decision-making all you could do is have patience. . . . In our task of program evaluation . . . we wanted to initiate constant monitoring. Without budget it was not possible. So, we proposed for budget which took one whole year to get approved. Never mind the delay, the good thing was that we could initiate the activities the following year. Such was the case when I wanted to initiate correspondence with the students [participants]. (Correspondence on November 28, 1992)

In our further discussion on the issues related to the problem of application of the skills learned in the program, Dev began to talk about the characteristics of the society at large. He saw a relationship between the social values and the problems encountered in innovations like the radio-based BTT program.

> D. We are living in an oppressed society. We have not been allowed to be creative by the system. The very process of indoctrination starts right at our homes where we learn to be subservient and submissive. We always value the saying that "we must always obey elders no matter what." The same dogma provides the norm for us at our work-place too. So, people working at the lower level always await for orders from those at the upper level for almost every action they take. People do not want to take self-initiatives even for worthwhile actions because such initiatives may put them into trouble. (Conversation on February 12, 1993)

Dev has made it clear that the docile nature inherent among practitioners, such as primary teachers, has been a serious obstacle for them to take self-initiative in improving their own practices. They function with a lack of self-confidence. The value people learn from early childhood of "obeying elders" has rightly been equated to terms like "submission" and "subservient" by Dev because "older" or "more powerful" people have nearly forgotten how to be responsible towards "younger" or "less-powerful" people. The more powerful people are lacking an openness towards those less powerful which is needed to allow them to grow to their potential. As Dev says the rule makers themselves have to first of all make sure that they follow the rules. But in the present Nepalese context, Dev contends, their expectation that others follow rules leads only to perpetuate "oppression" in the work-place. The problem is one of not being self-reflective.

Meaning of the Radio-Based BTT Program for the Central Staff of the Program

Ishwar

His Background

Prior to obtaining tenure in the Ministry of Education and Culture, and then in the RETT unit of the ministry, Ishwar was a secondary school mathematics teacher for many years. He started to work in the production section of the RETT project in 1984. In 1988, he was given the opportunity to travel to the U.S.A. to study for a Master's degree in Education. Upon returning in 1990, he was given a more responsible and senior position in the RETT office, which is, however, more administrative than technical.

As an administrator, he has the organizational responsibility for the RETT unit as well as responsibility for reporting to higher level authorities such as members of the National Planning Commission and other officials within the broader structure of the MOEC, including the Minister. Presently, he has been criticized, particularly by the higher authorities, for the program's "lack of effectiveness." For him, the overall working environment of the RETT unit was not pleasing. Ishwar had assumed the responsibility of working as a senior staff in the unit at a time when funds were being cut and staff were being transferred to other units of the Ministry.

The sophistication of the available physical facility in the RETT unit has been a "white elephant" for the program. The "modern" building is equipped with the latest technology (a telephone internal network system, several expensive vehicles and motorcycles, photocopying machines, modern typewriters, computers, and a sophisticated production studio) that was too much for the unit to keep reasonably productive. Unfortunately, the equipment was being abused by unauthorized people who had strong political backing. One of the vehicles, for example, was so badly misused by people affiliated with a political party and not staff of RETT that it is now lying wrecked in a garage. Ishwar was indeed going through difficult times.

The Meaning of Working in the Radio-Based BTT Program

After completing all the conversations with other participants (except Lalit and Krishna, with whom the last conversations were scheduled for March 9 and 13, 1993, respectively), I became interested in having a conversation with Ishwar. I wanted to discuss my impression of my conversations with some of the participants and my experience of attending the resource classes with them, as well as develop some

understanding of the program from an administrator's perspective. I called him at his home and told him about my interest. He indicated a willingness to participate and invited me to his office on March 5, 1993. Our conversation lasted about an hour and one-half.

Ishwar was coordinating the production of broadcast materials for the RETT program when I met him for the first time in 1984 at the RETT office. Although I have known him personally for almost ten years, I have not had any opportunity to work with him professionally. However, because of our long-time relationship, we quickly became involved in our conversation without any apparent sense of apprehension. Since Ishwar currently was taking up an administrative position at the RETT office, our conversation dealt mostly with the issues related to the administration of the radio-based BTT program.

The questions I used for opening our conversation were based on my experiences of participating in the resource classes as well as conversing with the four primary and the two resource teachers. I was particularly interested to find out how the office was handling the issues raised by these participants. During our conversation I frequently shared my own experiences of researching the participants' meaning of the radio-based BTT program. He showed a great deal of interest in listening to my experiences and commenting on specific incidents. As well, Ishwar shared with me his experiences of working in the program. In a sense, our conversation was not only an attempt for us to come to an understanding of the meaning of the program, but also, it was an effort to understand other participants' views of the program.

The purpose of having my conversation with Ishwar was different from that with other participants. Therefore, the interpretations which follow are not categorized, as in the case of other respondents, according to Aoki's (1984) three evaluation orientations. Instead, I came up with three general themes based on the recurring issues and concerns that Ishwar expressed in our conversation.

Theme one: Lack of power and opportunities to make professional decisions and take appropriate responsibilities. To begin our conversation, I started with a general question:

R. What is the future of this program?

I. As a decision has been reached [although not formally announced] at the National Planning Commission, from next year on teacher training programs will no longer be conducted by this institution.

Ishwar was not happy with this decision. After all, 15 years had been spent on researching, planning, implementing, and managing the instructional radio programs for the purpose of teacher training. It took a great deal of time and the efforts of many

individuals, including himself, to arrive at the stage where it was possible to conduct radio-based teacher training. But one "unanimous" decision by the policy makers was enough to cancel the program. Ishwar felt that the policy makers made an arbitrary decision. The ignorance of the policy-level people became apparent to him when he confronted them in some of the general meetings. In those meetings, he was mostly a passive listener. He described one particular occasion when the Minister of Education spoke against the effectiveness of the radio-based BTT program:

> I was shocked to hear the Minister say bluntly that the radio program was not effective. One of the members of the National Planning Commission who was also in the meeting supported the statement. . . . Later, I asked the Minister to allow me to have an hour of his time to talk about the program. He agreed that he would see me sometime later. . . . But, despite my regular reminder, he never gave me any time to see him. . . . I have, however, talked to the member of the National Planning Commission. I told him "you should not have said that the program was ineffective without any basis. Not at least as a member of the National Planning Commission. No study has been conducted to assess its effectiveness. . . ." After listening to my complaint, he agreed to set aside Rs. 300 thousand for conducting a study to assess the effectiveness of the program. We accepted to carry out the study. But the budget did not go through at the Ministry of Finance. He had promised to arrange the funds in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Finance. But the same representative later said that the budget did not come through.

Institutionalization of the program was one of the main long-term goals of the RETT project. With this understanding, the USAID poured millions of dollars into the project, and the Nepalese government worked out the necessary administrative procedures that included the creation of a number of new permanent positions required for operating the RETT project organization. With all those initiatives, a distance teacher training institution was established. But, as Ishwar disapprovingly admitted, within three years after the USAID funding ended, the interest in continuing teacher training through this institution also ended.

Ishwar indicated that one of the main reasons why the institute was under pressure to move away from the teacher training activities and into other activities was because of the difficulties it faced in monitoring field-level activities: for example, finding the funds necessary for field trips by the central staff. This is the same kind of problem that the DEOs face in sending their supervisors into the field for school inspection. As Ishwar mentioned, the per diem as specified in the government regulations does not meet the actual field expenses:

> About two or three years ago, we had made regular contacts with participants. The problem faced, as usual, in that sort of activity was that the colleagues visiting a program site didn't get adequate TA/DA [travel and

> daily allowances]. The allowances were so low that they couldn't even buy enough food. The amount they used to get was Rs. 35 [approximately $1 per day] which would not even be enough to pay for their accommodation. So, to assign them the task, as well as for them to accept the assignment, had been a serious problem.

Without regular contacts between the participants and the central staff, the radio-based BTT program did not make much sense to the participants. Ishwar was aware that the participants' interest in the program depended on whether or not the central staff maintained regular contacts with the students, and he thought that only regular contact between students and the central staff could insure continued interest in the program:

> The reason why they did not show much interest on broadcast lessons was because of our own inability to keep in touch with them. If we had occasionally sat face-to-face with them, it would have ensured an on going dialogue. We could then expect that they take interest and listen to the radio programs. Unfortunately, this has not been the case.

While acknowledging the importance of occasional face-to-face contacts with the participants, Ishwar also expressed a sense of helplessness about the program's inability to maintain such contacts. Cooperation for such activities during this post-project period was particularly difficult to obtain both from the ministry and local levels. The government, on the other hand, was not in a position to support the field level activities to the same extent that the USAID did during the project period. The field level activities, as understood in the government's regulations, should have been the responsibility of the local administration, namely the District Education Offices (DEOs). The grudges that people outside the project held because of the extra "privileges" enjoyed by the project staff still haunted the daily administration of the program:

> I. Many staff at the ministry do not even consider that this program is the ministry's own. There is a perception that it is a USAID project [although it no longer was] and the staff within the program get extra privileges and facilities, such as traveling abroad, riding vehicles etc. . . . Similarly at the district level, the District Education Officers do not seem to have taken any responsibility towards the program.
>
> R. There seems to be a lack of commitment on the part of the government. At the ministry level, no other sections are interested, and at the local level, those who are supposed to have helped implement the program don't take the responsibility. This indeed indicates a lack of coordination among different units under the structure of the Ministry of Education.
>
> I. It is a big problem. The local authorities should have clear instructions from the ministry about their roles in the program. As the staff of the program, we may simply request the local authority for their help. We cannot order them to do things for the program.

However, the problem of maintaining on-going contacts with the participants was not something that the RETT office could have controlled. If the local educational administration failed to take up this responsibility, then it was a government bureaucracy weakness and not a program weakness. But instead of accepting this weakness and improving the administrative structure, the policy makers questioned the program's credibility and made a decision to discontinue it. As an employee of the government, Ishwar did not have any choice but to accept the decisions made at the policy level and assume whatever responsibility he was assigned by the government.

Theme two: Confronting the problems associated with communication difficulties. One of the issues that we discussed was related to what I learned from the participants about the extent to which they listened to the radio programs. Ishwar agreed with me that most of the participants were not too keen on listening to the radio programs. He pointed out some factors that could have contributed to this problem. The first factor was the relationships between the program office staff and the participants and resource teachers.

As already mentioned under the first theme, the program office had not been able to send its staff into the field. There was minimal or no contact between the participants/resource teachers and the central staff of the program; therefore, a close and mutual relationship between the two groups was out of the question. They only had a distant relationship, which according to Ishwar was not good enough to ensure that the participants would listen to the broadcast lessons:

> A close relationship is very important. If we had visited the participants occasionally, they would at least have a sense of closeness with the program and its organizers. The current program looks like something that has been tossed off in front of them. This is what they feel. We have only been able to organize a brief meeting in the beginning of each BTT session. There would not be any more contacts with the participants. We know that this is not an appropriate way of conducting the program. But we don't have any solution to this problem.

Not only did the participants lose interest in the program because of such a relationship, but the central staff missed opportunities to learn from the experiences of the participants. Ishwar made it clear that learning from the participants should have been as important to the RETT staff as developing programs for the participants. A willingness to learn from the participants initiates a new relationship with a possibility of growing intimacy. I explained to Ishwar how I felt when I was with one of the participants while he was teaching in an "ill-equipped" classroom filled with local children, most of whom were barefoot and "improperly" dressed. Although I had assumed certain things about this teacher, experiencing a moment like that gave me a different view of the teacher. Ishwar

agreed that this in itself was a valuable learning experience and stressed that learning should be two way process:

> It should not be that only we teach most of the things to the participants. From them too we can learn a lot of things.

As we started talking about the importance of learning from the learners themselves, we began to critically analyze the perspective with which most of the Nepalese teacher educators approach teachers in order to *give* (a literal translation from the Nepali term *dinay*) them training. I shared the following story with him:

> I was observing the math class that one of the participants was teaching. He was teaching how to add and was using the traditional method through which most of us have learned. After the class was over, we had a brief discussion. I asked him if the students would be able to apply the math concept that he was teaching in actual life. His reply was "no they can't. They have not understood the concept in the first place." I asked him, "Why didn't you use the abacus that is there in your school?" He said, "I don't know how to use the abacus." Actually, in radio, the way an abacus could be used has been discussed. It also taught the concept of place value. But the teacher himself was not clear on the concept. It does not mean that he does not have a concept of addition. The problem, however, was that he had difficulty in linking his understanding of addition to the symbolized, concept of addition. Then I tried to establish a relationship between what he knew about addition to how it has been symbolized and we got into a discussion, particularly about place value—that it is simply naming groups of number in standard terms. Our discussion helped him to be a little clear [about the standard format]. The teacher simply didn't have opportunities to realize his own potential. I met him again after about 1 month. This time he was a changed person [with respect to his ability in comprehending the standard mathematical symbols]. One small spark was enough for him to realize his own potential. I had done nothing but exert just a small push by posing critical questions. He indicated to me that those questions forced him to think critically about the concept of addition that he was trying to teach. He also developed skills to use an abacus. So all he needed was a gentle push for him to get going. A teacher of that level, a S.L.C. with 4-5 years of teaching experience, perhaps needs help to be reflective. Teachers have potential for self-learning. But no project report seems to have documented such type of experiences that teachers might have gone through. The trend simply seems to be delivering ready-made packages to teachers.

As a teacher himself, Ishwar could identify with the experiences of other teachers. The above story intrigued him, especially because it involved mathematics teaching—a subject that interested him. He agreed that teachers involved in actual practices have the potential to learn by themselves the skills they need for teaching in their own contexts, but he felt that those involved in developing training materials for teachers often fail to recognize the potential of such teachers. He indicated that the difficulties faced by teacher training programs were not due to a lack of teacher commitment, but because of the

perspective with which teacher educators organized the training programs. He also admitted that by accepting to work in one of these programs he too had joined the same club of teacher educators:

> We are only concerned with our own approaches. We have never thought about situating ourselves among teachers' conditions. Whenever we get into discussions with teachers, we keep on emphasizing our own points, and we always believe that what we think is right. . . . We listen too little. We are very bad listeners. We can pinpoint others' weaknesses but never think what it would be like to go through the situations in which the others already are. . . . We are too much self-centered.

Ishwar did not think that teacher educators who organized teacher training programs would be successful in attracting participants' authentic participation without showing a sense of responsibility toward others. Similarly, given the type of relationships that the central staff had with the participants, Ishwar was not sure how seriously the participants of the radio-based BTT program listened to the radio broadcasts and attended the resource classes.

Ishwar realized that the broadcast time was another reason why teachers did not listen to the radio programs. The inappropriate time of broadcast was the most common complaint expressed by the participants of the BTT program:

> The most common complaint teachers made was about the inconvenience of time [of broadcast]. We have our hands tied too in this matter because we do not have our own transmission station. We have to depend upon the Radio Nepal's schedule. The later evening time is allocated for commercial purpose which is very costly. . . . Because of such a problem we are of the opinion that this institution must have its own transmission station.

Ishwar's explanation that the problem of time was indeed beyond the institute's control was convincing. If the participants and the resource teachers had known about this problem, they might have accepted the situation. But among the resource teacher and the participants in the resource class that I attended, the impression was that the central staff did not appreciate the teachers' concern about the inconvenient broadcast time. The resource teachers and participants were not aware of the difficulties faced by the institution.

Obviously, the professionals at the office could not see the importance of communicating this information to the practitioners. They could have used it to be closer to the participants. But, as Ishwar realized, a cordial relationship could not be established between the participants and the central staff because the program activities were managed from a remote centre. As a result, the participants never had access to seemingly trivial but crucial information of this nature. They always remained distant and objectified. With such status and without any sense of the internal problems of the related institution, how could they be committed to the program and listen to the broadcasts regularly?

Ishwar felt that the availability of the Self-Instruction Materials (SIMs) was another reason for the participants to avoid listening to the radio programs. This material was largely the duplication of the broadcast lessons. Most of the teachers eliminated the radio programs with a hope of finding the information in the SIMs. Ishwar saw the material as being a substitute and not a complement to the broadcast lessons:

> One of the weak aspects of this program is the provision of the Self-Instruction Materials for the participants. The materials are being used as a substitute to the radio programs. They should have been developed and used as supporting material.

In the beginning, the SIMs were developed and distributed among the participants for a different reason. According to Ishwar, when the RETT project had just started, radio reception was poor in many remote areas, so the idea was to supply them with materials that would allow them to learn on their own. But the tradition continued even after radio reception was no longer a problem. Ishwar thought it was waste of time and resources to continue duplicating the broadcast lessons in the SIMs. For the participants, the simultaneous use of the SIMs and the radio programs was like participating in a program with two different approaches—namely, a correspondence course and a radio course. For this reason, some of them chose to rely on the SIMs as the means to become trained teachers. After all, other than the medium, the radio program contained nothing that helped the participants with the material in a more effective way.

Theme three: Problem of continuity and direction of the program. The RETT office as an institution established for primary teacher training was currently going through a stage of uncertainty and speculation about its future activities. As Ishwar said, many ambitious proposals were being discussed at the policy level. He speculated that the present structure of the institute might be expanded to eventually give it the status of a distance-learning centre. Ishwar thought that one of the changes that might be made immediately was a merger with the Audio Visual section of the Curriculum Textbook Supervision and Development Centre (CTSDC). After the merger, the institute might develop video programs for television broadcasting along with courses for in-school broadcasts. So it appeared that the institute was considering another major project, which of course would not be possible without the financial support from external sources:

> Once this institute is converted into a distance education centre some international organizations are interested to provide financial support. However, it has not been confirmed. Organizations like JICA [Japanese International Cooperation Agency] and DANIDA [Danish International Development Agency] are interested.

Ishwar acknowledged that conducting the RETT project for 15 years generated a body of experiential knowledge. However, the proposed changes within the institution had nothing to do with this body of knowledge:

> R. In the past 10 to 15 years, this organization has come through numerous experiences. . . . What did the experiences teach the concerned persons to come up with the present idea of distance-learning centre?
>
> I. In my opinion, reflecting upon the past experiences has not been a serious consideration for the concerned individuals. Not at any level.

There is a pool of trained human resources available for the newly conceptualized organization. During the project phase, as many as five professional staff associated with the RETT project were sent to the United States for graduate studies in education. Several other short-term study and observation tours in the U.S. and some Southeast Asian countries were made by technical and administrative staff of the program.

In addition to being trained in foreign countries, the staff had acquired a good degree of practical knowledge gained by conducting the program. However, the experiences that generated this knowledge appeared to be too bitter and complex to discuss with those who were working to give the institute a new direction. Ishwar's remarks implied that the staff did not have enough patience to deal with the complex problems that would have been raised by discussing the experiences encountered in the three programs conducted under the RETT project. In his opinion, however, it is important that these experiences be used to make the new vision more realistic and to help avoid the same sort of mistakes made in the former programs:

> R. I have no problem acknowledging the availability of human resources for technical support for the renewed institution. But what about the practical difficulties they experienced in the programs of the RETT project?
>
> I. Keeping in view the practical difficulties, I think the first phase of the new program must be spent on reflective discussions about the programs and plan new activities accordingly. It will not be wise to start broadcasting [a new program right away, whatever it may be] in this phase. This is what I think. Enough time should be spent to determine how to go about it. Let there not be the repetition of the same mistakes that the current and the previous programs made.
>
> R. Has there been any discussion on this issue?
>
> I. No. As far as I know no discussion took place in which the experiences [of the practitioners] on current and previous programs were reflected upon.

Ishwar believed that the radio program could have been the most effective and practical means for offering teacher training to the thousands of untrained primary teachers

in Nepal. Ishwar felt that because the government authorities did not do their "homework" they frequently would change the structure of training programs without considering the consequences. The current radio-based BTT program did not get a clear direction from the government because it kept changing its policies of primary education and teacher training. The RETT project was started in order to create an institution for training teachers at a distance. But now, as Ishwar said, the institute was likely to abandon the very audience for which it was originally established. The government did not have to produce a satisfactory rationale to make the decision that would put an end to distance teacher training through the use of radio. As Ishwar said, the decision has been made, and the institute will be used for some other purpose (although the purpose was still not confirmed). The government has made it easy for everyone to avoid looking back and worrying about how difficult it was to train teachers at a distance using radio as the medium.

Chapter IV

TRACING THE FRAGMENTS OF THE RESEARCH

Introduction

The concerns raised in the process of conversations with the individuals of different responsibilities directly involved in a distance-education program for teacher training have taken a thematic form in Chapter III. As the inquirer of the meaning of their participation in the program, I took an approach—for which I relied on my understanding of hermeneutics—to listen to what they had to say and be immersed individually with each of them in a conversational process of unfolding questions, issues, and concerns. The presentation of themes was, therefore, an effort that I made to linger "intimately in embodied thoughtfulness" (Aoki 1990, p. 2) in the participants' narratives of teaching and taking part in the radio-based teacher training program. By being involved in what Aoki (1990) calls the "reflective theming" of conversational texts, I experienced the "polyphonic voices of teaching" (p. 2) echoing from teachers with varying responsibilities.

The hermeneutic conversation with the participants allowed us to construct what Carson (1991), following Deleuze (1987), calls a "problem-position." In Carson's (1991) view, "the words 'problem-position' aptly describe the situated interpretive task that presents itself to us as teacher educators" (p. 1). The hermeneutic conversation with the participants was indeed a process of understanding the "situated interpretive task" of the participants, which was an attempt to identify the problem-position that we collectively constructed. The problem-position "places you in the middle of things and allows you to construct the problem out of elements drawn from all over" (Carson, 1991, p. 1). It was such a characteristic of the problem-position that allowed me to sense a common interest binding all the participants: an interest of improving practices to make school a better place for children.

The section on the reflective summary of this chapter will have three parts. The first part will be a reflective critique of distance education approaches. In the second part, I will reflect upon the main messages unfolded in the meanings of being involved in the radio training program for each of the three groups of participants: namely the radio-trained teachers (Yog, Chandan, Lalit, and Krishna), the resource teachers (Prakash and Bhagvat), and the program officials (Dev and Ishwar). Then, in the third part, there will be a general summary presented on the basis of the common concerns of the participants.

A Reflective Critique of the Distance Education Approach

Distance education evolved primarily as a response to the learning needs of people who, for various reasons, found themselves at the periphery in terms of taking advantage from the mainstream educational system. According to Perry (1990), immediately after independence from the colonial powers, there was growing pressure in all political systems to make education more egalitarian. Despite such a pressure, the formal education systems in almost every country had not been able to address the problem of equality of educational opportunities. This problem was (and still is) more intense in the "developing" world. One of the slogans of the politicians in newly independent nations had become "education equality." A major focus of distance education could not, therefore, be other than how to reach educationally deprived people and provide them with equal educational opportunities.

Young, Perraton, Jenkins, and Dodds (1980) highlighted the importance of educational expansion, especially in developing countries where universalization of primary education is a part of the basic needs program. But among the numerous problems faced in the efforts to achieve the goals for universal primary education, meeting the demand of trained and qualified teachers seems most challenging. It may not be practical to educate the required number of teachers merely by relying on face-to-face methods. Nor will this method alone be adequate to educate the projected number of primary age children. In view of this problem, many countries are looking for alternative and/or supplementary methods both for teacher education and formal schooling. For example, "part of Tanzania's response [in this regard] has been to create a distance teaching program on the huge scale needed to train teachers for universal primary education" (Young, Perraton, Jenkins, & Dodds, 1980, p. 4).

Although "distance education has often been seen as a means to improve access and equity within education and, therefore, more broadly in society" (Evans & King, 1991, p. 5), its basic philosophy is not different from that of the conventional educational system. The transmission model which has remained dominant in the broader system has been the only approach that most distance education endeavors have adhered. Evans (1991) following Bolton (1986) writes that "the history of distance education and its antecedents is linked to the development of modern societies" (p. 179). He contends that distance education has continued to take the philosophical stance that subscribes to the values and aspirations for industrialization and capitalist economies. On the other hand, the products of the industrial goods and services have served distance education with its educational means. "An acid test of this can be seen in developing nations where, when they have little capacity to produce [print materials] cheaply, or to print and distribute [them] via a reliable

postal service, the difficulties of commencing distance education seem insurmountable" (Evans, 1991, p. 179).

Harris' (1987) critical analysis of existing distance education strategies and approaches provided an insight about how contemporary distance education in one university functioned in relation to its social and historical context. He mentioned in the introductory chapter of his book *Openness and Closure in Distance Education* that

> existing accounts of distance education and the OU [open university] offer descriptions and analyses of a peculiarly abstract kind, developing general concepts seemingly from 'factual' descriptions, or borrowing them, often rather pragmatically, from (positivist) social sciences, usually with only a brief acknowledgment of the political, historical and social contexts within which these 'facts' or theories have emerged. (Harris, 1987, p. 2)

By being critical Harris (1987) was not trying to prove that the programs and courses offered by the institute were pedagogically unsound. His main criticism, however, seemed to draw our attention towards the lack of sensitivity of most of the personnel involved in designing and developing distance education materials towards the complexities inherent in the learners' social and historical contexts. For him it was necessary to question the claimed adequacy of educational technology and the way distance teaching systems had been legitimized.

> It is necessary to perform critique to widen public discussion, to correct the largely uncritical reception of these ideas by outside policy-makers, to contribute to debates under way by some insiders who have experienced some of the problems, and to help prevent an uncritical adoption of the procedures and techniques elsewhere in education, either in Britain or in other countries wishing to transfer British technology. (Harris, 1987, p. 4)

The relationship between learners and educational technology (referring to it as a more general term for distance education) was one of the hierarchical type. Harris (1987) contended that "educational technology clearly is a discipline which uses classic positivist techniques to subdue its object" (p. 131). For this matter, although sporadic attempts might have been made to appropriate the course materials on the basis of learner's subjective accounts, the basic aims of curriculum design had always been "to reduce complexities by transparent operationalizations" (Harris, 1987, p. 131). Research and surveys conducted in the field had tended to stick to the procedures that were often used to scrutinize all the complex factors to facilitate purposive and rational analysis of the phenomenon under study. There was a tendency to avoid emerging problems if they were too complex to pursue or something unanticipated in a particular research setting.

However, as Harris (1987) pointed out, in the new educational technology research the subjective interpretation of learners was beginning to find an important place as the result of the "paradigm shift" among some of the distance educators and course teams.

More and more qualitative and ethnographic studies were being conducted in the field of distance education. But Harris (1987) also argued that, although the new educational technology had shown its capability to break out of its self-imposed limitations, the approaches were not entirely free from some of the disturbing characteristics of positivism. Alternative research techniques, be these ethnographic or intensive interview, as deployed in the studies of the course teams[1] that Harris (1987) talked about, depicted undesirable and problematic results pushing several members of the study group to become impatient, and adopt a managerial approach to the problems.

> The problem is, even with the critical pieces, that inquiries are still too descriptive, and content to operate with a particular residual and unexamined view of subjectivity. These problems are common with 'progressive' counters to old-style educational technology too, it was argued. Once elements of unexpected subjectivity are uncovered, investigation stops and assumptions take over. (Harris, 1987, p. 134)

Harris (1987) made it clear that the way conflicts were being resolved in the educational technology studies clearly indicated that these studies were merely descriptive and uncritical. In such studies, care was taken to ensure that students' subjectivity favors instrumentalism. No chance was taken to jeopardize the self-proclaimed credibility of the teaching system by taking into consideration the more subtle aspects of students' subjectivity and their social and historical contexts.

In the similar vein, McNamara (1990), picking up on the Australian distance education trend, contended that in the process of design, development, and delivery of distance education a lot of emphasis was "placed on the provider rather than the client" (p. 242). While she seemed to acknowledge the space provided by the current climate of change in the discipline of education to improve specific fields such as distance education, she was also concerned that distance educators need to give some deeper thought to come to an understanding of the seemingly trivial but very crucial question "whom is distance education really for?"

McNamara (1990) saw a tension existing between the two aspects concerning the purpose of education which could lead us to understand this question from two different perspectives. First, there was a felt need to consider a much broader definition of education than what was conventionally being established so that learning became an open

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[1]A course team is responsible to produce courses for the British Open University. "A course team typically consists of a number of people, some full-time academics and some part-time 'consultants,' producers from BBC and an educational technologist from IET [Institute of Educational Technology], representatives from various administrative services, and, on occasion, external examiners" (Harris, 1987, p. 100).

process and served a long term purposes for the learner and society. Second, education could be turned into training "in which narrow, job-related goals and objectives are to be achieved, with anything outside these objectives being seen as 'optional extras'" (McNamara, 1990, p. 242). In Australia, as she mentioned, change was widely accepted in the field of education. So, there were opportunities for those working in the educational field such as distance education to shape its future. In such a context, they were faced with the challenge of achieving a balance between the two extreme views.

It is evident in the writings of several authors (e.g., Evans, & Nation, 1993; Grace, 1991) including those cited above that there are two issues that seek the attention of distance educators. How do we as educators view the philosophical stance of education in general and distance education in particular? What does it mean for the learners to learn from a distance education approach that presents a set of pre-packaged learning strategies with little or no regard to their reality? Many distance education approaches adopt educational models of well known open universities. On the other hand, "the open universities have been in the vanguard of internationalizing their operations" (Evans, & Nation, 1993, p. 10). What could be understood from such a trend is that the field of distance education is plagued by what Evans and Nation (1993) called the "global market" syndrome which is a prominent aspect of the every-day lives in the so called developed worlds. Evans and Nation (1993) have cautioned us of this danger:

> Government agencies fund exhibitions in foreign countries for their nation's institutions to show-off their educational wares. University emissaries travel the globe, often to *developing nations*, to sell their courses. Open university teachers work at 'internationalizing' their courses for the *global market* and others work at 'localizing' the courses that they have *bought in*. (p. 10, emphases mine)

One of the consequences of such a trend is that the learners are often brought to appreciate external and abstract values rather than realize the value of learning by building upon their own experiences as they participate in the learning process. Their effort to learn from the process inevitably drives them to make their meanings of their participation which are likely to be vastly different from what the educators or developers of the course materials may have perceived. As long as the distance education approach is by and large inspired by the metaphors like "global marketing, promotion of selling and buying of course materials," etc., there can hardly be any interest on the part of the institutional authorities to encourage the distance educators and course developers to be sensitive towards the meanings that the learners have made.

The radio-based BTT program of Nepal is not an exception in which the practitioners' meanings have never become a subject of interest in the evaluation studies of

the program. The institute which is responsible for conducting the program stands in-between the two worlds of the practitioners and the more influential group of individuals who are oriented by the dominant philosophical stance of positivism. The institutional task is, therefore, very challenging for the staff and the administrators who, from their positions, make their best effort to help the participants become better teachers. The participants too want to upgrade their teaching skills for which they want to rely on the program. However, because of the taken-for-granted structure of the program, the institute has not been able to make the difference that it could have made for the learners to learn from the program. Although the staff and administrators are bound to operate under the present rigid system, they are in a process of constructing their own meanings, as do the learners and the resource teachers, of their involvement in the program. But the importance of recognizing such meanings as a valuable body of knowledge is hindered by the very philosophical stance within which the overall educational system of the country functions.

Reflections on the Meaning Made by the Radio-Trained Teachers

The participants who were certified with the radio-based BTT program in 1992 already had one academic year of post-training teaching experience when I began my research in Nepal, while there were those who had just started the 1992/93 session of the program. My conversations with those from the former group were more reflections on what they learned in the training program about a year ago and how they made use of the knowledge in practice. The conversations with those from the latter group focused more on what teaching was for them and what they looked for in the radio-based BTT program.

The hermeneutic conversations with each of these participants allowed for some form of understanding of their experience of becoming "trained-teachers" through the radio-based BTT program. The program presented a complete set of pre-structured activities for the teachers, and they made meanings of these activities based on Aoki's (1984) technical, situational, and critical concerns. The notion of constructing the problem-position has provided me with a basis to reflect on some critical issues pertaining to the participants' experience of becoming a trained-teacher. The experiential, institutional, and cultural-philosophical aspects of the problem-position that Carson (1991) has identified have complemented the issues that are discussed below.

Limitations of Technical Solutions

The conversations with the teachers revealed that the technical notion of teaching had a great influence on them. While the conversations with previously trained teachers indicated that the techniques helped them broaden their knowledge base about teaching, the

conversations with the participants who participated in the current session of the program implied that their exposures to various techniques of teaching might help them to cope with the changing world. The radio-based BTT program, which included instruction in both teaching methodology and primary school subject-matter content, presented itself as a package that was consistent with the participants' aspiration to learn techniques of teaching. Clearly, the "teacherly identities" (Carson, 1991) to which the teachers aspired were also valued by the training program. However, as Carson (1991) mentions, such attributes cannot be "had" by a teacher as a result of his or her exposures to the techniques that are pre-packaged by the experts and delivered through an innovation like the radio-based BTT program. Becoming a trained teacher, particularly through this program, does not necessarily ensure that the teacher will have the pedagogical ability to attend to his or her students.

The participants had taught children for several years before they were trained. They had already lived some kind of teaching life and possessed their own theories of teaching based strictly on practice (McCutcheon, & Jung, 1990). But when they participated in the training program, they tended to forget how they, as untrained teachers, had already taught children. Also, the training program did not make any reference to their personal theories of practice while it involved them in the training activities. Their participation in the program restricted them to begin afresh to acquire content-based techniques of teaching and the desired qualities of a primary teacher.

However, it can be understood that the emphasis placed on teacher identities is rooted to the honest hope that such identities will ultimately allow teachers "to de-centre themselves in order to attend to the other—to their own students" (Carson, 1991, p. 2). But our conversations revealed that the lived situation of the participants was so complex that they found it extremely difficult to make connections between the technical solutions presented in the total package of the training program and their regular teaching practices. What appeared to be more damaging was that their failure to make such connections resulted in the participants' loss of interest in the program itself, and they often avoided listening to the radio lessons, relying mostly on the resource classes.

The participants of the 1991/92 radio-based BTT session, who already had one year of post-training teaching experience, clearly indicated that there was a contradiction between the content-based methods delivered to them in the training program and their experiential aspect. On the other hand, the participants of the 1992/93 session kept trying to find the connection between what they encountered in the on-going radio and resource classes and in their day-to-day teaching. They were not able to attain the teaching attributes

that they aspired to as they went along with the training sessions. Nor did they feel empowered in terms of their ability to attend to their students pedagogically.

The experiential aspect of the teachers' problem-position unfolds in the above discussion of the meanings of the program activities made by the teachers. Clearly, the radio-based BTT program provides no opportunity for the teachers to establish a relationship between their experiences and the program activities. The teachers have expressed that their pedagogical responsibilities extend beyond those explicit in the training program's curriculum to the necessity of responding to the calls of the children with extremely complex lived conditions. They are bound to establish certain kinds of relationships with the children that may be contradictory to the established principles of pedagogy. Their act of attending to such children is essentially too complex to shape it according to the content-based pedagogical procedures discussed in the training program.

In the teacher training program, the teachers were asked to establish what Desmond (1987) would call the univocal relationship with students and disregard their lived conditions. The univocal relationship seeks an absolute identity of other with the self (Desmond, 1987). What teachers have experienced when they attempt to establish such a relationship with students is not an issue discussed in the training program. What matters is completing every activity that is pre-planned in the total package of the program. As Harris (1991) contends, "Rational techniques always want to dismiss other forms of reason as simply irrational and worthless" (p. 223). The radio-based BTT program that has taken a technical-rational approach to training its participants and does not give any attention to the experiences of teachers.

Curriculum Restrictions of the Program

It was mandatory for the institution that organized the radio program to follow the teacher education curriculum that was informed by idealistic national aspirations appropriated by the experts of education and politicians. The main purpose of the radio-based BTT program was to deliver this curriculum to teachers and prepare them with specific techniques for teaching primary pupils. The teachers, on the other hand, did not know about the process of curriculum development. Nor did the program involve any activities for them to critically analyze the curriculum. In view of this situation, the radio-based BTT program could be understood, in Harris' words, as a "bad" or "uncritical" (as opposed to critical, emancipatory) approach to adopting a distance education or educational technology.

The process of development and the basic format for the current Nepalese primary curriculum was originally provided by the National Education System Plan (NESP) in

1971. Although the MOEC claims that the process of curriculum development and revision involved the participation of teachers and parents, the final decision about the curriculum was made in the Coordination Committee chaired by the Assistant Minister of Education (National Education Committee, 1990; Thapa, 1982). The Committee made sure that the curricular content and methods to carry them out in schools complied with national objectives.

Ironically, as the Master Plan Team (MOEC, HMG, 1991) recently analyzed, "The present primary curriculum has failed to provide a focus and direction to primary education in Nepal . . . [and its content is] overly academic, abstract, and non-functional" (p. 238). The primary teachers who were provided the first training opportunity in the radio-based BTT program implemented such a curriculum before and after the training. Neither in the training nor on any other occasion did the four teachers who participated in my research have an opportunity to critically explore the nature of the curriculum they had the responsibility of implementing.

The two teachers who had already taught one year after being trained could only speculate about the objectives and content of the curriculum on the basis of the content of the prescribed textbooks they were required to teach. In their entire career, they never read the curriculum document and were not encouraged to do so by a higher authority. However, they were almost certain that the curriculum was impractical because most of the topics covered in the textbooks would have to be taught and learned at an abstract level, with almost no connection to local values and culture. They did not find their training useful in helping children learn the textbooks any better than how they had learned them in the previous years. Nevertheless, they have somehow taught with those materials and learned to live in such a complex educational situation. What was this teaching and living like for the teachers? The program never tried to ask such a question. Nor did it change its basic approach to providing training to teachers in the current year. The two current participants also expressed their sense of helplessness about transferring the curriculum into their classroom instruction. They expected to learn techniques to overcome this problem when they took part in the radio-based BTT program, but they did not expect to be involved in questioning the abstract nature of the given curriculum. They did not expect to challenge the "legitimacy" of the curriculum, which in their perceptions was prepared at the national level by experts. Therefore, in the training program, they simply expected to develop skills of subject-matter teaching and accepted the curriculum as given.

None of the four primary teachers who participated in my study—each having at least seven years of teaching experience—had ever heard of the steps involved in the process of curriculum development in Nepal. As the Education Day Souvenir of the

National Education Committee (1990) claims, "periodic discussions with parents and teachers" (p. 22) is one of the eight steps involved in the process of curriculum development. But the teachers did not have any knowledge of such discussions. Therefore, for them, the curriculum was indeed an abstract concept. Over the years, they tried to teach children from the textbooks that were prescribed by the MOEC using their own ideas. They felt that their practically-generated theories of teaching might have been inappropriate to implement such a curriculum. This feeling also indicated their sense that they lacked "teacherly attributes, such as; authority, respect, the ability to inspire and to promote learning, and so forth" (Carson, 1991, p. 1).

The radio-based training program, in compliance with the curricular objectives, included instructions on some basic techniques of teaching subject matter content of the primary curriculum (Holmes, Karmacharya, & Mayo, 1993). The participants said that they were being helped by the program in terms of being aware of those techniques of teaching. Learning techniques was important for them as they felt that prior to being trained they were teaching children without any direction. However, the extent to which the techniques became useful for improved practice was not clear to them.

Learning techniques was, therefore, more of a means to possess the teaching attributes or identity than to reflectively attend to the pedagogical other. The radio-based BTT program consisted of a set of fixed activities for teachers and resource teachers and for the staff within the program office. The program, with those fixed activities, focused literally on the "competent performance of the externals of teaching—questioning, explaining, disciplining, and the like" (Carson, 1991, p. 3). In other words, it reaffirmed the need to be procedural in teaching—a notion that the teachers themselves inherited from their own schooling. Their hope to equip themselves with teaching attributes might have been fulfilled to some extent, but their problem of attending to children pedagogically remained unaddressed by the radio-based BTT program. In making teaching technically correct, the radio-based BTT program did not allow teachers to engage in activities that would allow them to critically understand the curriculum and teachers' own practice-based theories of teaching.

Complexity of the Teaching Context

During my 4 month stay in Kathmandu, I paid several visits to the schools where the teachers worked. I felt that not only was their social context very difficult for them and the children, but also, the overall school conditions were equally disappointing. The available physical facilities and educational materials were, in my perception, very inadequate. I could not visualize that the physical school environment could be of any

significant help for the teachers in their pursuit toward fulfilling the nationally set curricular objectives.

It was my feeling that if those schools were required to fulfill the curricular objectives they deserved to have much better physical facilities than what were available, although the teachers might have learned to live within the present facilities. It was not only disappointing to find the schools the way they were, but it was also disappointing to realize that the children coming to such schools would have to ultimately compete with those from more affluent families enjoying the privilege of going to schools with more resources. The teachers working in those contexts are not appreciated for what they have done; rather, they are often blamed for the "poor" quality of education. The reality is often forgotten as teachers are blamed for their "ignorance" in preparing children according to the national curriculum.

More than wondering how and what the teachers taught in their respective schools, I tried to focus on my own ability to understand their complex teaching atmosphere. By being attentive to their teaching worlds, I began to experience my own naiveté in perceiving such worlds, and by being present in these worlds I was painfully aware of the extent to which educators involved in developing educational programs could be forgetful of such a reality. In one occasion, while visiting Yog's school, I wrote down the following note:

> The day is very cold and windy. I am sitting in the grade 5 class where Yog is teaching "Our Sensory Organs." The roof of the building is supported on vertical metal posts each of which is erected at a distance of about 10 feet on either sides of the room (sized about 15'x20'). It is open above the 3 feet wall along the three sides while on one side a wall touching the ceiling is erected to partition the room from the adjoining one. A permanent blackboard is plastered on the same wall. There is no teacher in the adjoining classroom where children are making loud noise. In this room I can see the children shivering with cold. The wind is hitting them directly. Most of them are not even properly dressed. Many are barefoot too.
>
> Perhaps, for Yog, and for the kids, the extreme weather conditions are not a big deal. But I cannot remain without feeling sorry for them. For me it is a moment to learn what it is like to be the teacher and student in such a classroom. It is, indeed, a remarkable display of tolerance. Yog is speaking about "skin," one of our sensory organs. Ironically, the sense that his own (and the kid's) skin is experiencing is not realized. Instead he keeps talking from the book to explain the concept. (My field note December 2, 1992)

Visiting the same school after about three months was yet another interesting experience. It was February 15, 1993. I was already at the school by 9:30 AM. The weather started to show the characteristic of the changing season. It was hot, dry, and windy. The powdery dust that was being produced by the active use of the school premises by some 550 children had blown all around.

At 9:52 AM, all of the children took part in the assembly (a typical way of starting the day). It took Yog and one of his colleagues more than 15 minutes to line-up the children according to their respective grades. The small children were taking most of their time. Once the line-up was complete, the children were asked to drill the regular physical exercise as Yog gave commands by blowing the whistle. The activity following the drill was to sing the national anthem and to offer the prayer to the Goddess of wisdom. After that, all of the children marched to their respective classrooms.

Observing the performance of children engaged in physical exercise was quite interesting. The drill was part of the extracurricular activities explicit in the curriculum. This type of physical training is quite popular among some of the "outstanding" schools in Kathmandu. Children dressed up in their neat school uniform display the drill in an occasional public show. The spectacle presented through such an event contributes to sustaining the "outstanding" status of those schools. But at Yog's school, it was hard for me to make sense of how the activity fit into the overall educational context of the children. Was the activity for fitness? Or was it an attempt to develop the spectacle as in the schools of Kathmandu valley? Whatever the purpose, the blowing dust particles must have had a bad effect on everyone. If physical fitness of the children was the concern, then I wondered what could be better for getting fit than the miles of walking and climbing up and down mountains, which is an integral part of rural children's everyday life? Perhaps, it was necessary for the school to have this sort of activity to impress the local people that their children too are being trained to have faith in the "modern" values necessary for them to ensure the "upward" social mobility in this highly competitive world.

On February 16, 1993, a day after I visited Yog's school, I went to visit Chandan's school and spent the whole day. This school was no less dusty than Yog's school. I already felt the effect of the dust that I was exposed to earlier in the day. In my conversation with Chandan that day, we could not avoid talking about the blowing dust. I told her how allergic I became with the dust and wondered how she and other teachers managed to work in such an environment. She said it was no less difficult for her to work in such a condition.

On the same day, we also talked about one of the broadcast lessons on teaching health education. She thought that it was ironic to talk about the concept of "cleanliness," which was the topic of the radio lesson that Chandan was referring to, in an environment where children were living with dust during the dry seasons and mud during the rainy seasons. She said teaching the concept of developing the habit of cleaning the toilet to children who never used one is ridiculous. Commenting on the way the radio program

delivered the lesson, she said that teachers do not need to be told how to clean areas surrounding one's house or how to use a toilet and keep it clean.

Although it was not simple to understand the level of frustration experienced by both Chandan and Yog, it was somehow making sense to me as a result of my personal effort to situate myself in their context. The more I situated myself in their lived worlds of teaching, the clearer the message became in their voices. The kind of judgments that are made about teachers engaged in situational practices often lack a deeper understanding of the situation. The radio-based BTT program has been evaluated by external evaluators as well as by the staff within the project. The evaluators might not have left any room for criticism in terms of the standard method they employed, but they certainly failed to acknowledge the subtlety of situational factors that might have impinged upon the participation of teachers in the program. The overall evaluation process, as mentioned in the reports (Anzalone, & Mathema, 1989; Karmacharya, 1989), did not involve any attempt on the part of the evaluators to be attentive to the lived context of the participants. The program, "improved" on the basis of the recommendations of such an evaluation study, has continued the same mistake of ignoring the complex situation in which teachers live and teach.

Reflections on the Meanings Made by the Resource Teachers

As I mentioned in Chapter III, the two resource teachers of the radio-based BTT program who took part in my research were local secondary school English teachers: one of whom worked for the program for only one academic year (1991/92), while the other had worked for three successive years (1990-1993). Both are experienced teachers with adequate qualification and training. In their prolonged teaching career of more than 20 years, they have witnessed the changing form and changing content of the Nepalese educational system.

By constructing a "problem position" out of the meanings made by them, I have attempted to reflect upon what it was like for them to take responsibility for conveying the message of a technically-planned curriculum of the radio-based BTT program to a group of rural primary teachers. While they had this technically-planned curriculum to implement, they were required to do so within their own situational context. For them, operating as a resource teacher for the radio-based BTT program included confronting the contradictions between curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-lived-experiences (Aoki, 1991). Nevertheless, they have demonstrated their capacity to live in such a contradictory position, although they often find the living frustrating. The hermeneutic conversations with them, however, discern what their preoccupations are while they situate themselves in the middle

of their "problem position." How did they work as the resource teachers within the complex conditions of their lived world? What kind of relationship did they have with the personnel of the program? What kind of ethical dilemmas did they confront when caught in-between the responsibilities of implementing the rationally-planned curriculum of the radio-based BTT program and an implicit curriculum of their and the participants' lived world? From the point of view of these issues, I present the following reflections on the meanings that they have made out of their involvement as the resource teachers for the radio-based BTT program.

Lack of Coordination with the Program Organizers

In the overall structure of the radio-based BTT program, a resource teacher stands between the organizing institution and the participants of the program. For the participants, their resource teacher is the only person with whom they come into face-to-face contact on a regular basis throughout the training period. So the resource teacher has a significant role to play if the participants are to benefit from the training program. But the two resource teachers who participated in my research made it clear that they did not succeed in playing a "true" mediating role between the organizing institution and the trainees and, as a result, most of the trainees found it extremely difficult to pass the final examination of the program.

There are three aspects to this argument. First, as the resource teachers, they felt morally obliged to be held accountable for the failure of the trainees in the examination. Second, the institution had employed such a rigid curriculum for the BTT program that it could not be perceived as providing any room for what Hunt (1987) advocates as experiential learning. Third, the resource teachers did not have any contact with the personnel of the organizing institution and they were not able to engage in any professional discussions. Obviously, working in such a restricted situation did not encourage the resource teacher to be creative and strengthen their own "professional artistry"[2] (Schon, 1987; Evans, 1991; Burge, 1993). They continued their services to the program without having any say in the process of developing the very activities that they carried out in the resource classes.

It is possible that this disconnected relationship between the resource teachers and the educational developers of the radio-based BTT program was responsible for the

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[2]According to Schon (1987), professional artistry refers "to the kinds of competence practitioners sometimes display in unique, uncertain, and conflicted situations of practice" (Quoted in Evans, 1991, p. 14)

apparent low morale of the resource teachers (as well as the trainees). The program provided a basic theory of teaching as a "prescription" for improving the teaching practices of primary teachers. This theory was not transmitted among the program participants to the satisfaction of the resource teachers and the resource teachers did not have any opportunity to share their practical experiences with the organizers of the program.

Burge (1993) has convincingly argued against imposition of a published theory in a context where the practitioners experience that the theory does not seem to work. Instead, she, following Hunt (1987), proposes a self-reflective, "'inside-out' theorizing and greater valuing of our own experienced knowledge" (Burge, 1993, p. 233). In the radio-based BTT program, such a process of theorizing has not been acknowledged. The practitioners' potential to generate lived and practical knowledge—that everyone involved in the program may find more educational than the prescribed theory—has been subdued in the institution where an idealized myth of its own operations and organizations is maintained (Harris, 1991).

The Question of Professional Ethics

As I have mentioned earlier, the resource teachers had more than twenty years experience teaching rural children. Perhaps because of this experience, they were mindful of the situational conditions of the participants of the program, and perhaps for this reason, the resource teachers were inclined to have a more sympathetic than objective relationship with the participants. Although the manual of the resource class activities made it explicit that the resource teachers had to give priority to the technical and objective interests of the program, they cared less about those interests, giving more flexibility to the participants while seeking their commitment. Unlike an educator who might have been professionally promoted from, for example, an "ordinary" teacher to either a curriculum specialist, a professor in the Faculty of Education, or an educational policy maker in the Ministry of Education and Culture, the relationship of the resource teachers with the participants was more relaxed than authoritative. However, although not criticized, the resource teachers were not praised by the concerned authorities, at either the local or central levels, for having such a relationship with the participants. The resource teachers, on the other hand, had a sense of guilt, feeling that they had been professionally unethical by continuing to support this kind of relationship—while failing to be objective—with the participants.

The explicit activities of the radio-based BTT program can be viewed as being developed with an ideal that has to do with a metaphysical concept of educational development. The slogan "education for all" is an example of this concept, which is linked with the BTT program of Nepal. Based on aspirations of this kind, metaphysical values

are developed that help manifest the activities proposed for practitioners. It then becomes their ethical obligation to ensure that their actions comply with such values. The resource teachers, by establishing a simplistic relationship with the participants, perceive that they remain ignorant of the ethical considerations subscribed by similar kind of values. From the point of view of Heideggerian ethics (Caputo, 1989), however, the resource teachers, in their compassionate relationship with the participants, have acted responsively to their ontological conditions.

In differentiating Heidegger's consideration of ethics from metaphysical ethics, Caputo (1989) mentions that "talk about the truth of Being is ethical talk of more radical, originary sort" (p. 56). He contends that Heidegger's ethics are marked by an understanding of human life that respects a gentle letting-be condition for Being. Conversely, the ethics of metaphysics is informed by an understanding of human life as *techne* that believes in controlled and normative human actions. In highlighting the difference between the two forms of understanding, Caputo (1989) goes on to write: "In one, human life is conceived as the life of 'mortals' who move in rhythm with the powers of the cosmos, in the other as the raw materials of further control, of genetic engineering and behavioral technologies" (p. 56).

From the conversations with the resource teachers, and from my own experience of attending the resource classes conducted by one of them, I have come to an understanding that it is impossible for them to comply with the expectation that they engage in mobilizing the participants to fulfill the requirements of the program. For example, one of the basic requirements is that they listen to the broadcast lessons regularly, while in the resource classes the resource teachers, by inviting the participants to talk and discuss their particular concerns and questions related to the lessons, are required to help them obtain clarity on the lessons. Although it looks as simple as has been mentioned in the instructional manual for the resource teachers, in reality, at least in the resource classes that I attended, such a discussion never takes place. How can it be possible when the participants do not have any concerns or questions? How can they have any concerns or questions when, as the participants and the resource teachers with whom I spoke mentioned, they do not even listen to most of the radio lessons? And how can they listen to the lessons when they find those lessons vastly disconnected from their reality?

Therefore, my understanding of this scenario is that it is not the ignorance of either the resource teachers or the participants that results in not even the basic requirements of the radio-based program being met. Rather, it is a practical working condition inevitably created while those individuals try to situate themselves in-between the technical world presented by the training program and their lived teaching world. They are indeed engaged

in the practice of adopting the techniques subscribed by the radio-based BTT program in their working situation. In fact, they very much aspire to transfer the techniques in their practices. Yet, why they do not get transferred is not, in my view, solely because of their weakness. When the resource teachers try to adopt the rationally-planned curriculum of the BTT program in their resource classes, they confront participants who have socioeconomic and psychological conditions that compel the resource teachers, who are sensitive to such conditions, to make some practical decisions that are contradictory to the explicit responsibilities assigned to them. In one of the conversations, a participant mentioned that he is so preoccupied with his personal problems that often his presence in the resource classes is only physical while mentally he is somewhere else (for example, he thinks of his pending work at the farm and the possibility of a delay in getting a bus—which does not have any fixed time of arrival—to get back to the work; he may not be able to feed the buffalo on time and the milking time may be disrupted). The resource teachers, as they mentioned in the conversations, are cognizant of those types of problems experienced by the participants and the restrictions under which they have participated in the program. In being sensitive to them, the resource teachers took some unauthorized decisions, for example, allowing participants to sign-in for absent day—as their absence exceeded the maximum days allowed—so that they would not be deprived of taking the final examination of the program.

Reflections on the Meanings Made by the Officials of the Program

The conversations with the evaluation consultant and one of the officials of the RETT organization provide an additional dimension to my understanding of the radio-based BTT program. If the resource teachers and the primary teacher participants of the program are involved in a teaching and learning process through the radio-based BTT program, the government officials' role has been one of making the program as appropriate as possible for implementing at the field level. They, too, with their honest efforts to bring improvements in primary classrooms, are involved in activities that are at times quite frustrating and disappointing. Yet they have lived through the complex situation of their working environment, which is linked not only to the real world of teaching where the practitioners belong, but also to the worlds of bureaucrats and educational policy makers.

Our conversations revealed that the radio-based BTT program has been a victim of the government's narrowly perceived notion of education and development. These conversations also revealed that the practitioners at every level of the educational system have been suffocated by the rigid government policies and the totalizing approach to educational development. The idealized goal for the radio-based BTT program, as for the

other BTT programs, is Universal Primary Education (UPE) by 2000. While making the educational policies, the policy makers become interested in slogans of this nature, with little or no concern for the lived conditions of the practitioners. As an attempt to reflect upon these aspects unfolded in our conversations, I have identified three issues: (1) Necessity to Reinforce Technical Rationality, (2) Conflict between the Expectations and Commitments, and (3) Lack of Reflective Practice.

Necessity to Reinforce Technical Rationality

Although the radio-based teacher training programs came into practice in Nepal as an innovative distance education approach, they were developed within the influence of positivism that has been a dominant world view among the Nepalese educational bureaucrats. The evaluation consultant confirms that in Nepal it is extremely difficult to sell a "genuine" innovation. In Nepal, it is necessary for an innovation to remain innovative only to the extent that its form and content is secured within the predefined framework of the existing curriculum. Innovators must make sure that they keep the higher educational authorities satisfied by developing programs that first and foremost make it explicit that the activities designed have categorically complied with the national curricular objectives. It should not be within the scope of an innovation to make the curriculum itself problematic unless this very purpose is one of the objectives of the innovation. Therefore, if difficulties are experienced in the course of implementing the innovation, then they are attributed to the weaknesses of the innovation itself, but not to the weaknesses of the curriculum.

The radio-based BTT program had to take the same route as other typical educational innovations took over the past 35 years, that is, it had to limit its scope to the extent allowed by its agreed upon objectives. The evaluation consultant and the program official received a clear mandate that stated that they had to operate within the scope of the teacher training objectives of the government.

Their efforts to show the effectiveness of the program in terms of measurable outcomes, such as scores of pre-and post-program achievement tests, were exactly what was expected by policy-level personnel. In effect, the consultant and the RETT official both were bound to give priority to the delivery of technical knowledge of teaching for the program participants. Even though they gave priority to the delivery of technical knowledge, it does not mean that they are personally satisfied to be restricted by a technical notion of teacher training that does not allow them to consider the complex and diverse educational conditions of the participants that they confront in their practices. In fact, the structure under which they have to operate is so rigid that they cannot show any reasonable degree of sensitivity toward the lived worlds of the participants.

The necessity for the RETT staff and the consultant to comply with the technical notion and be objective in their approaches to improving the program is exemplified by one of the measures that the RETT project adopted in seeking feedback from the participants. Holmes, Karmacharya, and Mayo (1993) have mentioned, as have the RETT staff and the consultant, that "teachers were provided with a set of pre-addressed and stamped aerogrammes, with questions printed on them. They were asked to fill out and send in one of these aerogrammes twice each month for the duration of the course" (p. 167). The two specific questions that are asked in the aerogrammes are: "(1) In the last two weeks have you tried to implement any of the things you learned from the lessons? (2) If you have tried to implement anything from the lessons, please list the subject and the teaching method or activity you tried" (Holmes, Karmacharya, & Mayo, p. 167).

Clearly, the questions indicate that the program seeks for restricted information from the participants. It does not intend to get involved in the complex task of understanding their lived worlds. Aoki (1990) explains that such a behavioristic view of teaching allows for only a "distanced understanding of the world of teaching made observable by the I/eye" (p. 1). As he becomes concerned about the dominance of objective meanings "that crowd the landscape of teachers" (p. 1), Aoki seems to invite educators to pay attention to what Heidegger has said: "Objective meanings hide lived meanings. The latter becomes silent and man becomes heedless of this silence" (Heidegger quoted in Aoki, 1990, p. 1).

Conflict between the Expectations and Commitments

In the conversations with the evaluation consultant and the core staff of the RETT office, it became evident that the government is committed to providing an equitable system of education to all primary children by the turn of the century, for which it is relying on several educational programs and projects, one of which is the radio-based BTT program. At the policy level, quality and access are the two issues of primary education that receive highest priority. The two professionals at the RETT office do not dispute the importance given by the government to these issues. Since these issues take priority in the government plan, educational innovations like the RETT project are expected to initiate activities focusing directly on those issues.

Nepalese educational bureaucrats try to make explicit the aspects directly associated with high priority issues so that a concrete plan of action can be identified in order to objectively address the problems concerning the issues. One aspect identified to "solve" the problem of the poor quality of primary education is the training of teachers. Training then becomes a "buzz" word that is perceived to have a direct association with quality of

education. Although the two professionals at the RETT office acknowledge that training is essential for teachers to improve their practice, the professionals are not sure that training alone is going to make any change in the existing quality of education.

As one of the mainstream primary teacher training programs, the task of the radio-based BTT is to contribute to the improvement of the quality of primary education by educating primary teachers with the knowledge of teaching. However, the consultant and the staff are not convinced that the program has made such a contribution. They believe that there are many other aspects associated with the quality of primary education that the government officials ignore as they simplify their plan of action to come up with the "blue print" that, they assume, will systematically solve the problems related to the issue. Essentially, there is a contradiction between the honesty of the desire on the part of the government for improved primary education and the prescribed approach to achieving this end. In this approach, the complex but lived context of the classroom is not considered.

Reflections on the Research

The conversations with the participants who have been involved in the radio-based BTT program with various responsibilities reveal that the bureaucratic rationality with which the program is developed and implemented is problematic. It is the process of questioning, that animates the conversations, which has brought to light some of the subtle intents suppressing the practical knowledge generated on a daily basis in the lived worlds of the participants.

The research and evaluation studies conducted on the programs of the RETT project have documented how effective the programs have been in bringing changes either in the teaching skills (Paige, Graham, & Kalsek, 1984; CERID/MOEC, 1989) or in the knowledge of subject content among the primary teacher participants (CERID, 1986, 1987a, 1987b, 1988; Shaw, Edgerton, & Wagle, 1987). However, such studies have failed to consider how teachers have lived in their complex classroom conditions and what it means for them to be engaged in situational practice after they have completed a training course through the radio-based programs. In fact, the studies are mostly informed by a technical view that the educational bureaucrats find most convenient for formulating educational policies and plans.

As I have mentioned in Chapter I, I worked as one of the key researchers in some of the evaluation studies of the Radio Tuition program of the RETT project. Although my work in those studies was heavily influenced by a technical view, the experiences provided me with a strong foundation for engaging in hermeneutic conversations with the participants. Some degree of understanding about hermeneutics helped me to re-live the

researching moment with the eight participants with a renewed world view. I am convinced that the hermeneutic insight has made it possible for me to establish a more trusting relationship with them, which I cannot recall as being the case in the former studies.

The participants had their respective roles to play. In being involved in the training program, each of them, as expected, tried to understand teaching as a technique that a program official should be able to prepackage, that a resource teacher should be able to teach, or that a teacher-participant should be able to learn. However, even in their best efforts to accept this mode of becoming or helping others to become trained teachers, they have faced difficulties identifying with the techniques that are presented in the training package. For the teacher-participants, there is yet another stage, that is, transferring the knowledge learned into the actual classroom. There is a practical aspect attached to this process of preparing, teaching, and learning the training package. Unlike the technical aspect, the practical aspect is surrounded by uncertainties. Drawing upon Gadamer (1975), Carson (1984) distinguishes between the sphere of technique and the sphere of practice:

> *Techne*, belonging to the sphere of making (*poiesis*), is the attitude of standing over against objects for the purposes of (re)production. Practice (*praxis*) belongs to the sphere of doing (*phronesis*) and it is the ethical attitude of doing the right thing in concrete situations. Because practice involves making ethical decisions, the actor cannot assume a "scientific" non-self implicating objectivism. Understood in this way, practice cannot essentially be grasped by using technical means of investigation. (p. 202)

Nonetheless, the participants, in trying to be involved in the radio-based training program and living in their practical worlds, have situated themselves in-between the sphere of technique and the sphere of practice. This is a condition which Aoki (1991) describes as a pedagogical situation of living in tensionality, "a tensionality that emerges, in part, from in-dwelling in a zone between two curriculum worlds: the worlds of curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as lived-experiences" (p. 7). In every practical situation, the practitioners in-dwell in such a tensionality. By accepting to live in such a tension, the participants found some sort of dynamism in their teaching life. As well, the meaning of being involved in the radio-based BTT program that the participants have constructed in this research is an outcome of their in-dwelling in such a tensionality. Apparently, however, the participants were required to make most of the adjustments in their practices in order for them to maintain the balanced tension created by being involved in the radio-based BTT program. Some issues have surfaced as I reflect upon the efforts that the participants have made in maintaining this balance.

The Extent to which the Program becomes Dominant with Instrumentality

> The drive for "technological" control over learning by . . . "instructional industrialists" in distance education can also be seen as an attempt to impose a form of positivist, naturalist science within distance education partly to obtain the kudos and mystique that such mythical forms of control imply. (Evans, 1991)

The discourse of the participants of this research about their involvement in the radio-based BTT program echoes their helpless status of being controlled by the authorities of the MOEC, by those who Evans (1991) calls "instructional industrialists," and by those who have provided the conceptual framework for the development of the program. The authorities of the MOEC seem to think that they have indeed obtained their "kudos" by maintaining such control over the practitioners.

The precedence of the conceptual approach over an approach based on the social context of the practitioners (Grundy, 1987) to developing the curriculum of the radio training program indicates how an orientation based on instrumentalism has put a shadow over the educational environment of the practitioners. In the conversations, which involve as much listening as speaking, the participants have offered an insight of teaching as living along with a critique of the rational techniques emphasized in the radio-based BTT program. Such an offering is well grounded in the lived experiences of practitioners. But in a procedural and technical approach to designing, developing, and implementing an innovation like the BTT program, the participants' experiences do not get the kind of acknowledgment they deserve. In such an approach, practitioners are simply expected to take up a role that is limited to complying with the kind of action that Aristotle (1962) associates with a craftsperson (or in the original term, a craftsman). Grundy (1987) provides an example of how a teacher operates like a craftsperson:

> A teacher may be very skilled in teaching "times tables" using a variety of rote learning methods. When she teaches, she exercises her choice among methods. However, if a new syllabus document is developed which requires the learning of number facts through other than rote methods, our teacher's range of teaching options is limited. (p. 23)

A highly skilled craftsperson may be able reproduce the conceptual idea (*eideis*) of a product into a concrete form. Teachers trained in the spirit of craftspersons are expected to be reproductive as opposed to productive, creative, or self-reflective. The technical-rational approach taken by the radio-based BTT program has emphasized that its participants learn specific teaching techniques and become skilled craftspersons. As a result, what the schools have been reproducing is an educational scenario where children find curriculum abstract and confusing. As well, at the secondary school level, the reproduction of 70% to

80% failure rate in the SLC examination every year is likely to remain the same as long as the present mode of instrumentalism dominates the overall educational system.

Issues Related to the Groundedness of the Program

The fundamental question that needs to be asked in relation to the radio-based BTT program is why is it necessary to train teachers with a combined use of radio lessons and resource classes? Holmes, Karmacharya, and Mayo (1993) explain the rationale behind the instructional radio for teacher training in Nepal:

> As early as 1974, it was evident that some alternative to traditional, face-to-face methods of providing teacher training would have to be used if the targets set out in the NESP were to be met. Various forms of distance education were considered. Given Nepal's rugged, mountainous terrain and the absence of a reliable transportation system, making delivery of printed materials highly problematic, it was proposed that radio carry a larger share of the instructional burden than was typically the case in other distance-education systems. Radio offered the best and cheapest means of reaching most of the country's schoolteachers. It would also enable trainees to be linked directly with the best teacher educators in the country—a response to the concerns already voiced at that time that the quality of teacher education was declining as the numbers going through the system increased. (p. 141)

It appears that the distance approach was initiated as an alternative to the conventional mode of training teachers and as an answer to the problem of the geographical isolation of the places where practicing teachers work. Their isolated situation is viewed to be highly problematic for delivering the prepackaged program that provides them with instructions to teach "effectively" the centrally-developed primary curriculum. So the medium of radio is perceived to be cost-effective, time and resource saving, and, most of all, capable of delivering a uniform program developed by the "best teacher educators" to all the participants at the same time.

The extent to which a distance-education approach can provide much more grounded learning opportunities for untrained Nepalese primary teachers does not seem to concern the educational policy makers of Nepal. The radio-based teacher training programs have been launched in order to achieve educational goals defined at the highest level of bureaucracy. Obviously, such programs cannot be expected to be sensitive to the complex educational context in which its trainees dwell as untrained educators.

From what the participants have expressed in the conversations, it appears that the radio-based BTT program lacks flexibility and responsiveness. My conversations with them lay open the questions about the contradictions between their lived conditions and the rationally-planned curriculum of the program. The trainees are left with being mere passive

participants without opportunities for extensive dialogue on the message delivered to them by the radio programs and resource classes.

The resource teachers have specific tasks that take a major chunk of the resource class time, leaving little or no time to initiate discussion on participants' experiences of being trained and teaching children in their respective classrooms. Clearly, the program has not allowed the trainees to build upon what they have already known and experienced. The resource teachers, although cognizant of the contradictory nature of the rationally-planned curriculum of the program, have no other choice but to continue completing the list of activities prescribed for them in the resource classes. Like the trainees, the resource teachers have not had any opportunity to share their experiences with the higher officials from whom they get instructions to conduct the resource classes.

As compelled as the resource teachers are to discuss participants' experiences, they can only concentrate on accomplishing the assigned tasks, which allow no time for discussion about the participants' experiences. The higher officials to whom the resource teachers report are also compelled to carry out the tasks assigned to them by higher authorities, and as a result, they have no time to listen to the stories of teaching and learning generated at the participants' workplace. The conversations with the evaluation consultant and the RETT official confirm that there are weaknesses inherent in the program that seem greater than the ability of the RETT personnel to counter them. The radio-based BTT program has a mandate to comply with the BTT curriculum developed by the teacher educators of the Faculty of Education and curriculum experts of the MOEC. The possibility for the program to employ an open learning approach that would allow for inquiries into practitioners' life experiences has been blocked by this mandate.

Some aspects of the radio-based BTT program may be called flexible. For example, although the trainees are expected to listen to the broadcast lessons on a regular basis, they have not been questioned if they failed to do so. The teacher participants of my research chose not to listen to the broadcast lessons regularly because of various reasons. They have simply relied on the Self-Instructional Materials (SIMs) and the resource classes to complete the program and pass the final examination. But the participants did not appreciate this kind of flexibility. They wanted to be regular listeners of the radio program, but somehow, the program does not seem to provide the participants with the kind of discussions or information with which they can identify.

The hermeneutic conversations with the participants have revealed that they were not given opportunities to take "responsibility for their own learning" (Lewis, 1988) *from the program*. This is a problem of their inability to connect their lived world of teaching with the abstract and methodical world of teaching presented by the program. The abstract

and methodical nature of the program makes it a rigid as opposed to an enabling program for the learners. Lewis (1988) could be understood as saying that for the program to be enabling, it needs to allow the learner to take advantage of it rather than expect the learner to adjust to the program.

One of the factors in an open learning process discussed by Rumble (1989) relates to the selection of content. He asserts that "programs . . . which include obligatory courses . . . based on a defined syllabus are less open than those which allow learners some choice between courses" (Rumble, 1989, p. 30). The learners in the radio-based BTT program are compelled to learn from a syllabus decided for them by experts. The fact that they have already been teachers for some years and have experiences of their own has been ignored. Why cannot they chose to build upon what they already know about teaching in their respective context?

The purpose of the a basic teacher training is understandable that the teachers who have never been trained need to be made aware of the basic techniques of teaching. But, the use of radio as the medium makes it almost impossible for a constructivist approach to provide learning opportunities for the learners. It is also understandable why the program is not a wholly distance-education approach. Of the total of 150 hours of program instruction only 80 hours of the instructions are broadcast related. Seventy hours of the instructions are still based on the face-to-face method carried out in the form of resource classes. But the resource classes too are so rigidly structured that there is no provision for the trainees to inquire into their own experiences of teaching.

Issues Related to the Consideration of Distance

> Distance . . . is a word which is rich in connotations; of space; of possibility; of place and time; of groundedness; of both connections and apartness, without and within; and of tenacity despite difficulties. (Haughey, 1993, p. 141)

The radio-based BTT program has evolved through numerous efforts made by the RETT project over a period of twelve years since 1978. The priorities of the project have always been "to maximize learning and to minimize the participants' feeling of isolation" (Holmes, Karmacharya, & Mayo, 1993, p. 149). It is the latter priority that draws my interest. I want to know how the term "distance" has been used in the RETT project, particularly in its BTT program.

Clearly, it has been assumed in the RETT project that there is a "feeling of isolation" among the participants of its programs. However, in light of the meaning that the participants of this research have made and the broader meaning of the term "distance" used by some distance educators (e.g., Evans, 1989; Haughey, 1993; Moore, 1991) I have

come to an understanding that such an assumption can be understood as having come from individuals operating with an ethnocentric view of development. An implicit message that they have tried to pass on to others by making such an assumption is that *they*, the rural primary teachers, should be rescued from being who they are in order for them to become like *us*, the educated people and this is how they should be empowered.

The hermeneutic conversations with the participants confirm that such a view is embedded in the overall structure of the radio-based BTT program that it shadows their day-to-day practices and influences how they construct their lived meaning. The participants are perceived to be at a *distance* from the point of view of lack of opportunity for them to be exposed to the mainstream techniques of teaching. The radio training program intends to provide them with this opportunity through its prepackaged curriculum. What gets overlooked is that "meanings of distance are also cultural constructions" (Haughey, 1993, p. 140).

It may not be reasonable that in the name of distance education the learner is invited to move apart from his or her social reality. An ethnocentric approach to education demands such a move from the learner. Consequently, he or she is likely to be confronted with an either/or dilemma. I feel that a truly educational program does not force its learners into such a situation. It should be more of an encompassing approach that allows the learner to see possibilities in the diverse places/distance. It leads learners beyond the either/or situation and encourages them to make use of the conjunction *and*: to learn to appreciate this place *and* that place *and* another place *and* so on. In the spirit of this feeling Haughey (1993) writes:

> Our affection for place, and our focus on the ground, the context which shapes and is shaped by us, stress the need for distance educators to recognize that students do not necessarily consider themselves deprived because they are not somewhere else, namely our "here." We need to give more consideration to the notion of place, where people are able to be themselves, as a positive force for learning rather than a deficit because they do not have access to the same resources—and we do not have the same direct access to them. (pp. 141-42)

Each of the participants belongs to his or her home, school, community, and so forth. They have already become who they are as a result of living in their respective places. The educators engaged in the organization and development of the radio-based BTT program are honestly committed to helping the participants become better educators. But the organizers, as they endeavor to help the participants, have remained forgetful of the possibility of themselves become better teacher educators by learning from the participants who they are and what it is like for them to be in their places. Developing such a sensitivity

is indeed becoming open and responsive to the call of the practitioners that their socially constructed meaning of distance be acknowledged.

Finding Possibilities in an Approach to Educating Teachers at a Distance

In this section, I will proceed by first commenting on how the superficial approaches dominating educational development endeavors in Nepal block the profound possibilities that a distance-education program, such as the one organized under the RETT project, could offer for teacher educators, higher educational authorities, and the practicing teachers who have rich contextual experiences but are out of touch with the external world. Johnson (1992) convincingly reminds us of the possibilities inherent in distance learning approaches that Nepalese distance education programs have yet to realize:

> Education at a distance, though appearing to fail to meet the traditional institutional criteria that once, but no longer, characterize higher education can, if it chooses, both reconstruct community and bridge education to the world "outside" in a way more profound than conventional education. (p. 7)

The higher officials of the MOEC and the National Planning Commission, with their perceived "failure" of the RETT project, have come to a *decision* that the current radio-based BTT program should be discontinued and instead propose to develop a completely new program (conversation with Ishwar, March 5, 1993). Such an attitude may be misguided if they truly believe that their information shows that the problem is with the program or the participants.

Some very fundamental and crucial questions have not been asked or thought about. Will the participants of the new program identify with the way the program is structured and delivered? Will teachers be able to learn from the program and, in turn, transfer the knowledge to their respective contexts? What may be the consequence of implementing the program with a greater control of bureaucratic rationality over the structure and content of the program? To what extent will the provision of training at a distance also be a genuine learning opportunity for the participants? What aspects of distance should be considered when training teachers at a distance?

The analysis of the meanings of being involved in the radio-base BTT program for the participants reveals that none of the above questions received serious consideration in the overall structure of the program. However, it has only been possible for me to lay open these questions after coming this far with my dissertation. The process of coming up with these questions involves critical reflection that is not included in the activities of the radio-based BTT program. Therefore, as I see it, the program should find significant a study of this type which not only allows for an illuminative evaluation of the program activities, but

also leads the individuals involved in it to be critically reflective of their practices and become pedagogically more sensitive.

Finally, to conclude this work with an opening for further exploration in the field, I now attempt to present some of the aspects that, as I see them, may strengthen the *educational* bearing upon which the current teacher training program at a distance rests.

Questioning the Curriculum

An analysis of the meaning of the radio-based BTT program for the participants reveals that the participants question the abstract nature of the primary curriculum. Although the curriculum is at the centre of all the activities of the program, the participants are not allowed to understand it critically. Limiting their participation to merely learning some prepackaged techniques does not allow them to attend to their children any more pedagogically than they had been previously practicing. The fundamental questions pertaining to the relevance of curriculum cannot be taken for granted in the name of becoming trained teachers. Therefore, I find it important that critical reflection on the relevance of curriculum should be integrated into the program activities. Specific recommendations as to how such an integration should take place is beyond the scope of this study. Further inquiry may, therefore, be needed to determine how to integrate this critical reflection.

Initiating Action Research

The instrumental approach to training teachers has surfaced in the analysis of the meanings made by the participants. Such an approach hindered practitioners' growth to become independent and creative pedagogues, with the freedom to act in the best interests of children. The program lacks the opportunity for participants to reflect upon the coherence between theory practice and thereby identify their own learning needs. In other words, they are not given the opportunity to be the researchers of their own practices. For this to happen, there is a need for the troika of trainees, resource teachers, and the officials of the program to come together and get involved in action research. Oberg and McCutcheon (1990) explain why classroom teachers should restore their right to investigate their own practices:

> The teacher-as-researcher movement is based on teachers' liberating themselves from ideas solely imposed by others outside the classroom. In a sense, it constitutes an acknowledgment that teaching belongs to teachers and that as the experts about their own practice, teachers are the ones most able to understand and refine their work. One method of doing this is to do research about one's own practice. . . . Action research constitutes research that teachers do, either individually or in groups, their own professional

> practice in order to understand and improve the nature and specifics of their work and to become more articulate about it. (p. 142)

One of the major problems shrouding the structure of the radio-based BTT program is precisely like the one Oberg and McCutcheon (1990) suggested in the above quote, that a set of prepackaged activities presented by individuals outside the classroom is always imposed on the trainees in the program. The participants feel that they have not been able to share their own experiences of teaching with the fellow participants as well as with the instructor and the officials of the program. As a result, their participation in the program has only been a superficial attempt to become competent teachers with little or no pedagogical significance. In such a context, initiation of action research can be seen as an approach that may help practitioners transcend from being passive listeners to collaborative partners in shaping the program according to their pedagogical needs.

An Epilogue

The distance approach to training teachers should not restrict its activities to delivering the techniques outlined by the so-called experts of education. The trainees should be allowed the opportunity to critique the existing educational system in general and the curriculum in particular. They should be allowed to be self-reflective.

Following McNamara (1990), who asserts that "distance education [has potential] to develop beyond the boundaries laid down by the structures of on-campus learning" (p. 242), Nepal should reform its distance approach to teacher training without being restricted by the rigid traditional practices of a typical teacher-training curriculum. Nepal should dare to step beyond the boundaries laid down by such a curriculum. What is needed in the Nepalese teachers' context is an opportunity for a constructivist orientation to learning.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR THE CONVERSATIONS WITH THE PARTICIPANTS

Questions for Primary Teachers

1. How long have been teaching? Why did you choose to be a teacher?
2. What does "teaching" mean to you?
3. What was (were) your idea(s) about teaching before you participated in the radio-based BTT program?
4. How do you describe your classroom and the students you teach? How are the students related to you? Are you happy/unhappy with the kind of relationships you have with them now? Why are you happy/unhappy?
5. Will you explain what school authority, parents, and children expect of you as a teacher?
6. Is there any difficulty in meeting those expectations? In what way are they difficult? How does a teacher education program (radio-based BTT in particular) contribute meeting those expectations? Will you explain in what way are those expectations reasonable (and/or unreasonable)?
7. What kind of teaching skills or other lessons did radio-based BTT program taught? Is there any particular model of teacher that the program aims at developing among its participants?
8. What other personal and/or income earning works you have to do other than teaching? Why and When do you do these other works and how much time do they take?
9. What would you think if you were told to spend less time in these other works so that you could spend more time in becoming the kind of teacher that the RETT project wants you to be?
10. In what way were the teaching skills taught through radio-based BTT program useful, relevant or irrelevant to you?
11. What aspect(s) of radio-based BTT program did you like the most?
12. What aspect(s) did you find the worst?
13. How much of sense was the program making in relation to the classroom situations where you daily find yourself in? What did it say about the kind of relationships you are having (or ought to have) with the kids?
14. What were your expectations when you participated in the radio-based BTT program? What did it turn out to be?
15. What other way would you prefer the program to have launched?

16. If a radio education program were to launched to fulfill the kind of expectations you have what difficulties might be experienced by everyone involved and related to the program?

17. What is your opinion about the individuals involved in developing and launching of the radio-based BTT program? What kind of relationships did you have with them? What kind of relationships would you have preferred?

18. What are the problems (reception, timing, interaction, understanding) you faced in learning how to teach through radio? Did you have habit of listening to radio? What programs do you listen most? What other media could have been used to suit your expectations?

19. Did you have opportunities to talk about other teacher education programs with those teachers who had been through such programs? What did you come to know about such other programs? What aspects of your professional and personal life will be affected by any of these modalities?

20. What sort of distance has the implementation of radio-based BTT program overcome (geographic, conceptual, cultural)? Does it need to be more open? In what way (e.g., providing courses based on teachers' perceived needs rather than administrative convenience)?

Questions for Resource Teachers

1. How long have you been a teacher? Why did you choose to be a teacher?

2. What does "teaching" mean to you?

3. How do you describe your resource class and the students you teach? How are the students related to you? Are you happy/unhappy with the kind of relationships you have with them now? Why are you happy/unhappy?

4. Will you explain what the RETT authority expect of you as a resource teacher?

5. Is there any difficulty in meeting those expectations? In what way are they difficult? How does the RETT project contribute meeting those expectations? Will you explain in what way are those expectations reasonable (and/or unreasonable)?

6. Is there any particular model of teacher that radio-based BTT program aims at developing among its participants?

7. What income earning activities (other than teaching) are the participants engaged in?

8. What would you think if they were told to spend less time in these other works so that they could spend more time in becoming the kind of teacher that the RETT project wants them to be?

9. In what way do you think the radio-based BTT program useful for participants?

10. How much of sense does the program make in relation to the classroom situations where the participants daily find themselves in? What does it say about the kind of relationships they have (or ought to have) with children?

11. As a resource teacher, what do you expect from the program?

12. What changes would you like to see in the program?

13. If the radio education program were to fulfill the kind of expectations you have what difficulties might be experienced by everyone involved and related to the program?

14. What is your opinion about the individuals involved in developing and launching of the program? What kind of relationships did you have with them? What kind of relationships would you have preferred?

Questions for Evaluation Consultant

1. How long did you work in the RETC project? What were your responsibilities?

2. What do the participants of the radio-based BTT program know about teaching? What type of pedagogical relationships do you think they have with children?

3. Do they have adequate academic background or enough content knowledge which would allow them to successfully make use of the "training" offered by radio-based BTT program?

4. What content knowledge should teachers have to be eligible to take part in the program? When you were working in the project, did you find the eligible teachers genuinely having such a knowledge? Did it matter whether or not teachers had such knowledge in smoothly conducting the program?

5. How enthusiastic were teachers while they were going through the program? For those who did not show such an enthusiasm, what could have been the reasons for this?

6. How appropriate was the radio-based BTT program for the kind of life (both professional and personal) teachers were living?

7. Is it possible to make such distance teacher education programs more relevant for teachers? Who needs to be changed (behavioral, attitudinal, organizational, political)?

8. What aspect(s) of the present program must be sustained and what must be changed or improved?

9. Is it necessary to be sensitive to teachers' lived condition while developing and launching a radio training program? What aspects of teachers' lived conditions must be considered in developing such a program?

10. Is it necessary for teacher educators or someone involved in developing radio lessons to always stick to theories of teacher education and ask teachers to follow them in actual practice?

11. What were the most important aspects in evaluating the radio-based BTT program? Were they appropriate?

Questions for Official of the RETT Unit.

1. How did you get involved in the RETT project? How long have you worked for the project?
2. What is the present status of the RETT project and what is your view about its future?
3. What lessons have been learned from the RETT project experiences of more than twelve years?
4. In your view, how will the program continue to support the government's plan of universal primary education by the turn of the century?
5. Now that the program is no longer sponsored by the USAID, do you see any problem for its sustenance?
6. What is your view about the attitude of the higher officials of the ministry towards the program?
7. How did the termination of the USAID funding affected the constant monitoring of the program's field level activities?
8. How are the concerns of participants of the program acknowledged in the process of improving (if any) the program?
9. What kind of relationship is there between the teacher participants and the program developers/organizers?
10. How convenient do you think the teacher participants are finding their participation in the current radio-based BTT program?
11. In what way do you think the program is open or close for them?
12. How do the final examinations that the teacher participants must take contribute learning among them?
13. What happens to those who cannot pass the final examination of the program?
14. How do you think the radio-trained teachers help children learn better in their respective classrooms?

Appendix B

THE PROCESS OF ANALYSIS OF THE CONVERSATIONS

A series of conversations were held with each of the participants in the course of conducting the research in Nepal. There were 19 two-hour audio tapes containing the recordings of the conversations. Each tape was transcribed verbatim but some reflective notes were taken while transcribing the tapes. For each participant, the transcript of the tape recording of the first conversation was analyzed and themes were identified. Several topics also emerged in the process. The themes and the topics were used as the basis for conducting subsequent conversations with the participants. In those subsequent meetings, additional clarity of understanding the themes and topics identified was ensured. After completing the field research and the preliminary analysis I returned to Canada where I did the final analyses and interpretations of the themes. As an example of the process of analysis, a sample of themes and the corresponding portion of the first conversation specific to Yog, who was a participant of the radio-based BTT program during 1991/92 session, is presented in the following section. The following sample of five themes is selected from among the total of twelve themes identified in the first conversation. The 22 topics which were also identified in that conversation are listed following the presentation of the sample themes and were used as a basis for further discussions with Yog.

Sample of the Themes Identified in the First Conversation with Yog

Theme: Being aware of techniques was helpful for teaching.

R. I was trying to ask what difference did the training make in your teaching? Has the training been useful and made you a better teacher than before?

Y. My training has been fruitful for me and my students. Because, prior to being trained we did not know the techniques of teaching. Being aware of these techniques is an advantage. Because, if we want to teach, for example, a concept that the earth is round, then we can present numerous examples, by drawing on the blackboard, or by presenting the shape, etc.

R. Were you teaching before without all these skills?

Y. I was teaching somehow and I knew that my teachings were not that effective. Now I feel that my techniques of teaching have changed since I took the training.

R. What techniques did the training teach?

Y. I learned how to develop instructional materials and how to use them for better student understanding in particular lessons. I also learned how to assist students in their co-curricular activities and how to encourage them to develop interests in those activities. And something about how evaluation is done.

R. Were you not doing all these things prior to taking training?

Y. I used to.

R. Then how were they different?

Y. The difference was that on those days my skills were not adequate enough while now it is much more . . . The training helped me conduct my classes systematically.

R. What were the skills that Radio Education taught?

Y. As I have already said it taught us how to develop instructional materials. Although before too we used to develop materials, we did not know how to make proper use of those materials. We ran into problems while teaching. After training things became easier, for example, if I was to make a watch I knew the technique to make strong arms of the watch that could be rotated as well and could be used to teach the concepts of time.

R. Didn't you know how to make such material before?

Y. Its not that I didn't know before but once you give time and become engaged specifically in learning the technique it does make a difference and you develop an insight into it. But without learning and being involved in such a process it would not be as easy to develop the materials and see their importance for teaching purposes. . . . You can conveniently teach if you have already learned some basic techniques. Without learning we can teach, but you will find it difficult.

R. Are you saying that as soon as you took the training your skill to make the material would improve?

Y. Yes, I became aware of some basic techniques. That is what I think.

R. Well making a material like the model watch should not be difficult. If you made two arms and put them by the centre of a circular disc with number from 1 to 12 it is made. This type of skill . . .

Y. . . . is known to you before too. But if you have learned something you feel like applying it frequently. I found it that way. If you didn't learn it, you would use it less.

R. Does that mean in the learning process you also learn how to use the material?

Y. Both the methods, to use and to make, would be learned. For example, the resource teacher was assigned the responsibility in this regard.

R. The resource teacher would help?

Y. He taught us how to make the materials and we have to make them. He used to evaluate the materials developed. He kept some of the materials for his school and others he returned and asked us to keep and use in our respective schools.

[Reflective note: Although there might be a lot of proliferation in theorizing on the generic teaching skills they are important for teachers to know but certainly are not everything in teaching. Knowing the general language of teaching is important because it has not been created arbitrarily. It involves a lot of hard work, experiences, and research. The knowledge, therefore, provides teachers with foundations for talking and listening about the theorized components of teacher education. It may help teachers to reflect upon their own practices. Training allows them to see the merits (significance) of different techniques of teaching. The important point seems to be the opportunities that teachers would get for interacting with others. In such interactions ideas based on experiences and theory can be

discussed and new possibilities appropriate for individual teachers can be explored. There is a fairly good chance that such activities take place in a teacher training program. Unfortunately, such processes are confined to the training only. No follow-up takes place or the process is not an integral part of teaching].

Y. We do need training.

R. Does that mean we have to some how organize training programs like the ones that are being conducted. Or should there be different kinds of training programs?

Y. Different kinds! This program is just fine as far as teaching-learning is concerned. It has been prepared with an objective as to how students would be taught effectively so that they learn knowledge and skills.

R. How practical is it? The things which the Radio teaches about how lesson plans must be prepared and how evaluation must be done, how practical are they?

Y. The program emphasized that teaching should be conducted making use of locally available material in developing teaching aids. I like that. As for example, if you needed a map the training does not expect you to put all your effort to find it in the market and buy it. It tells us that such maps can be made by teachers themselves with whatever limited materials available to them. In fact, it encourages that teachers make use of materials developed by themselves. I agree with this. When we say locally available materials we can consider, for example, in math teaching stones, sticks, etc.. This is OK and fine.

R. Have you been doing that?

Y. Yes. I had to continuously make use of locally available materials. For example, if we didn't have an abacus and had to teach 2 plus 2 is four then I ask students to bring ten *Sinkas* (special type of sticks used both as toothpick and leaves staple) and the next day we learn [the concept] by asking them to count as they add the sticks in one hand from the other.

R. What did you like the most and was interesting in the Radio program?

Y. Well, in that as I said it has given a lot of emphasis on local resources and materials. Other than that . . . Evaluation etc. all we have been doing, not much difference in it. (p. 19).

Theme: Realization of weaknesses of technique and the program (RETT) that advocated the technique

R. Is there any relationship that you ought to have with students in order for you to teach effectively?

Y. Yes. It is absolutely necessary to have a good relationship with students. We ought not look down upon them no matter how they look, clean or dirty, rich or poor.

R. When you wanted to teach a concept, such as the one you mentioned that "the earth is round," what factors impinged upon student-learning?

Y. Atmosphere affects student-learning. What are the conditions at school? Teaching might get disturbed due to noise coming from outside. Teacher may not be able to attract students towards the lesson. Whether or not students are motivated? All these factors affect student-learning.

R. Why don't students get motivated?

Y. It depends upon the atmosphere. The child may be hungry, then he or she may not show any interest towards the lesson you are teaching about [for example] that lesson on "the earth is round." He is being tortured by some other problem.

R. How many of the children in your class would stay hungry?

Y. Usually in the morning it is not a prol·l:m. But after the fifth period it becomes apparent.

R. Is this a regular problem in your classroom.

Y. Yes. The child would have a cramped stomach because of hunger and in such a condition he or she may not pay any attention to what is being taught.

R. Who is to be blamed? When the child suffers from hunger and won't be able to learn who is responsible?

Y. Now what do I say? I think, it is because of the poor economic condition. Perhaps birth in a poor family might have been an unfortunate moment for the child. Perhaps, his or her own fate is like that. No parent would like to deprive his or her son from good food and clothing. So, lets say its the child's own fate that is to be blamed.

R. Can you as a teacher do something to improve this situation? Can you as a teacher do something to help the child?

Y. You mean in arranging food?

R. No. In some other ways. If the child was hungry and did not learn that time should a teacher just ignore that?

Y. Oh! no. We must not ignore. We must try hard to allow him or her to learn.

R. In what way can you help the child? It is practically impossible to provide food. But is there any other alternative?

Y. When we teach we have to make sure to attract his or her attention. We have to find ways to ensure this. For example, we may tell a story, or create an interesting atmosphere. We must try what ever will work.

R. Will such efforts really work to attract the attention of a hungry child?

Y. It may work for a short period of time.

R. In order to be able to handle this situation could Radio Education do something?

Y. Problems would not be the same at all places. Problems are place specific. For example, as I have known, at Sindhupalchok district student number is very low in almost every school. In whole school of five grades there would be only 60 to 80 students. Not all places confront the same problems. Now, I think, the program must have been developed with an overall view of different problems encountered at different places. The objective must have been to make the program best-fit for both schools with high and low student size.

R. Does that mean that although you took the training through radio, while teaching you still have to take into consideration the realities of the context where you teach?

Y. In principle we have to have definite objectives of teaching. This is what we learned. But in practice we have to act according to the situation. We have to be sensitive as to what changes would mean more effective learning for students. [Personal note: Curriculum as planned supersedes curriculum as lived].

R. What didn't you like? What you felt was not right?

Y. The thing which I didn't like in the program is that it is not well organized. I was not satisfied with the examination system. We had to write tests on four different subjects in one day. Time was not sufficient. Also in a primary level curriculum small and basic [more general] things should have been included and taught. I found the standard inappropriate. [Personal note: Distortion from the basic/main purpose. Objective meaning hides the lived meaning. . . Ritualization/instrumentalization of the radio-based BTT program]

R. You mean too high standard or too low?

Y. Too high standard. For developing teachers' knowledge, perhaps, high standard might have been good but . . . What children learn should be [directly] useful for them. [Personal note: instead of complicating learning by "theories" of teaching more practical and immediately useful matters should be discussed]

R. What was the significance of writing exams in Radio Education?

Y. The basic idea was to assess whether the knowledge that teachers received through studying self learning material and the radio program was right or not.

R. Whether it was right or not! How can one assess that?

Y. Through exams.

R. Could there be any other approach?

Y. Actually we have been involved in a practical too. The Resource Teacher is assigned the responsibility [of conducting resource classes] by the District Education Office. . . .In the resource classes most of the things are practical stuff, for example, development of educational materials which we had to submit. Then we had to do practice teaching and demonstrate [some kind of] extracurricular activities. These are all practical stuff.

R. Practical indeed, but could what you did while you were being evaluated also be replicated in the actual classroom teaching? You must have taught in a specific manner

while demonstrating your practice teaching? Did you think that sort of teaching would work in reality too?

Y. I cannot say that it is possible every day because some time and situations do not permit it. As far as possible and as long as the time is available we ought to do in the manner we did in the practice teaching.

R. Have you been doing that?

Y. Yes.

R. Have you been doing the same thing in your classroom teaching that you presented in front of the resource teacher in your practice teaching ?

Y. I am doing so as long as it is possible.

R. Did you also find it impossible sometimes?

Y. When you didn't have enough time and whenever you have some personal work to do then that might not have been possible.

R. How many students were there when you did your practice teaching?

Y. I didn't do it among the students but among the teachers. [Personal note: Ritualization, distortion, self-defeating approach]

R. How could it be the same as teaching children? Teachers are adult.

Y. At that time our practice teaching was conducted in three groups. I was in the second group. The first group taught teachers themselves. In the second teaching group some 5 to 7 students were invited in the classroom.

R. That is not the kind of classroom you teach.

Y. No. We considered [in the practice teaching] everyone in the classroom as students including the teachers sitting on the desk.

R. In your class there are 80 students. Now would you be able to teach such a classroom in the manner you taught the class in the practice teaching?

Y. It certainly is different to teach a small class than to teach a large class.

R. Then what type of evaluation would have helped you more? Your responsibility is to teach those 80 students. Or should they have observed your actual classroom teaching?

Y. Well, that may not be possible yet I would say that an evaluation done amidst the actual students would make more sense.

Theme: Responsibilities beyond the curricular scope

R. Does your present school environment have something to do with how you teach?

Y. I agree that one of the key issues is school environment. Ideally, for example, in each class there should not be more than 30 children while we are compelled to conduct classes with 80 students.

R. That could have been something which the school couldn't do anything with its limited resources. So this is one type of problem. Is there any thing that Radio Education program has done in tackling this problem?

Y. I have not come to know about any such thing that the Radio Education has done in this regard.

R. What do you know from your own experiences in [the program]?

Y. In my experience I didn't find many arrangements made in this regard. Although, according to the training program we were supposed to conduct classes with fewer children and make the teaching more effective, these things are not happening.

R. How many children are there in your class?

Y. In grade four I have to teach 80-82 students.

R. So this is totally a different context than what Radio Education . .. .

Y. That's what I am saying. Practical difficulties are not considered in the objectives of the curriculum. What you practice is different from what objectives are sought for. At times you simply forget the objectives and deal with the situation.

R. So, the problem remains as it is?

Y. Yes

R. In order to tackle the problem what did you rely on?

Y. Now principally we should follow Radio Education and in practice we have to operate in our own way. In principle, as it [Radio Education] says, we are supposed to conduct classes with smaller student size and effective teaching. But our conditions do not allow us to do so and we would have to take up our own style depending upon the situation. For example, in a class of 80 students less homework would have to be assigned. If there are five questions asked in a lesson the we cannot ask them to do all five questions. Up to two questions should be assigned. Even this would demand a lot of time and effort and we barely would be able to check all of them. Therefore, while assigning homework we have to make sure that we check all of the submissions. [Personal note: Curriculum as lived is not the domain of overall planning of educational system].

Theme: Possibilities for teachers in a distance learning approach

R. Did the Resource Teacher provide suggestions and comments?

Y. Yes that certainly took place every time. After each practice teaching about 10 to 15 minutes were spent on follow-up discussions regarding the mistakes or how the teacher could have taught better. Then the resource teacher used to give his suggestions. [Personal note: Merit of the face-to-face contact embedded in the distance education program. Resource teachers' positive role. Possibilities of interactions. Improved relationships]

R. If the Resource Teacher had observed your actual classroom teaching could there be some difference in his suggestions? Would he possibly give you some more useful suggestions?

Y. There could have been some more suggestions.

R. Which one would have been more useful for you?

Y. Certainly the one which he suggested in an actual classroom situation.

R. So you think this sort of activity was not possible?

Y. Practically it was not possible

R. Why wasn't it possible?

Y. There was only one Resource Teacher while participants are many. It would not be practically possible for him to visit every classroom of each participant. In town where every facility is available that may be possible but in villages teachers are scattered all round, either on this side or on the other side of the river, up and down the hill, these are the conditions in the village. So, for that reason he would not be able do that. This situation forces that all the participants to get-together at one spot and collectively conduct [the resource classes and practice teachings]. [Personal note: This is an understandable constraint. This is why in Nepal there is a need for a distance education approach in teacher education]

R. Do you think that Radio Education could have been implemented in a better way? Do you have any suggestions to make?

Y. Radio Education? Oh yes, it would have been much better if it was implemented with more emphasis on practical aspects. For example, priority should have given to those teachers who are working at school. There were 200 or 400 [marks] education which some teachers have taken for the SLC. Now those who did 400 marks education were not allowed to participate. [Personal note: A concern for openness. The program must not be examination oriented but process oriented. It needed to be more open].

R. You mean it would have been worthwhile?

Y. Apparently, they did their practice teaching as part of that 400 marks education course. But the difference would be then they were not teachers and now they are teaching. When one is not a teacher he or she just takes a chance. Furthermore, he is also not sure which profession he would take. There was not any bond that those who did 400 marks education must go to teaching. The teacher education which the students went through was a waste of time. Although I did 200 mark education, I cannot recall, how teaching materials were developed and what their significance and use were. Even in 200 marks education subjects had to be studied.

R. Those who did 400 marks would already have done most of the things taught in the Radio program. But still their participation in this program would have had a more significant impact on them. Is this what you were trying to say?

Y. Yes. I think they would have benefited from the program. But perhaps because this was going to be repeated it might have been perceived unnecessary.

R. Do you think that this type of program would be useful for both trained and untrained teachers?

Y. Yes. More than that. Participating in such a program would certainly make a difference for an in-service teacher who had gone through an education course [such as 400 marks education] merely as a high school student. [Personal note: Too much goal oriented and stressed on product rather than process]

R. In your case too, you have taken training through this program. Now if you once again had an opportunity to participate in the same program you might have gained more?

Y. Not the same program but a little higher level and a little more useful.

R. That means in-service training should be organized continuously?

Y. Yes, occasionally in a different fashion and in a little more comprehensive form. Needs more exposure for teachers. Follow-up and continuous processes important.

R. You mean using Radio broadcasts?

Y. Yes

R. Again the same medium?

Y. Alas, no means other than radio could be possible. There is no choice. Radio is [mostly] available everywhere. This is an easy means so it should be used. [Personal note: Realization of relevance of appropriate technology, and the medium]

R. Did you find the Radio Education broadcast time inconvenient?

Y. Actually for me it was quite an inconvenient timing because teachers in a hilly area would have to walk up to 2 hours to reach and then come back from school. In such inaccessible places teachers . . .

R. What about your case?

Y. Mine is not that inaccessible. I can reach home from the school in about 15 - 20 minutes. It was not that bad for me. There was one teacher in the resource class who was complaining that it would have been better were the broadcast time moved a little later at night.

R. But why did you say that the broadcast time was inconvenient for you?

Y. For us too, at time when there is work to be taken care of on the farm this timing is still a day time. Because this is still a bright day time we may not get adjusted to it. It would certainly be better off to have a different time.

R. That time could have been utilized for other activities?

Y. In a way yes. Not always but occasionally when you must do other work then you feel that with a little adjustment of time you wouldn't have missed [the broadcasts]. It becomes a problem only on such occasions, otherwise it's OK. And I was trying to say that the teachers in the resource class used to complain that they have a job at a distant place. You have to walk an hour or an hour and half. Now given such a condition the teachers would

[in a typical day] find that the radio program was already in the air or over before you even reach home. Now let us talk about the recent month, Mangsir. The program time during the month of Mangsir is 5:30 PM. Now they leave the school at about 4 or 4:15. There are schools at remote places where teachers come to work from as far as 1 or 1:30 hour walking distance. Therefore, the teachers were complaining that this time of 5:30 be moved later to 8 or 8:15. "By this time we would have reached home. We could spare time to listen and lessons would not be missed." The peers were making such comments.

R. You didn't have any problem understanding the broadcast programs?

Y. Most of them I understood. If they were not understood we used to consult the self-learning material. If some of them were still not clear or some difficulties were faced then we used to discuss them with the Resource teacher.

R. How did the resource teacher treat you?

Y. Quite good. He was doing his work in the best possible way.

R. Did he give an impression that he is more knowledgeable than the teachers?

Y. No he didn't seem to behave egotistically.

R. Did he feel that he was not only teaching but also learning from coming into contact with the participants?

Y. I think that was how he felt.

[Reflective note: Evaluations should be emphasized for improving practices. Feed-back and continuous follow-up are essential in order to take advantage from examinations and tests]

R. For what purpose should we have examinations? What is an examination for?

Y. Now it's again the same thing. That it might be for assessing whether the teachers learned what they were being taught in the training.

R. What else should it be for?

Y. Practice should have been more important. They apparently have done through practice teaching.

R. You were also tested in the practice teaching. Weren't you given marks in your practice teaching?

Y. Yes.

R. What I meant was in practice teaching you were tested and given marks, weren't you? Similarly you take exam and receive marks. Wouldn't it make any sense to talk about what you did in the exam or about the marks you scored?

Y. That would have been really good.

R. You were tested, marked, and that's it, period! You either pass or fail and after knowing this you put a closer to it. What if you failed?

Y. If you fail then perhaps you re-take the exam.

R. But the failure didn't get any feedback.

Y. No and also he cannot re-take the lessons.

R. "These are your weaknesses and this is how you taught, and you failed for these reasons," shouldn't such comments be made?

Y. Definitely. I feel strongly about this. No such arrangements have been made in the program. The teacher who failed would have to wait for the whole year just to take the re-examination. There is not any special arrangements for the teacher to get ready for the test. Whatever he or she had learned in the previous year was all for him or her.

R. Now even if he or she passed the examination what is it that he or she learned?

Y. There is no guarantee that learning really takes place. Whatever he or she went through before, and perhaps used in the following year-round, that's the most the person would have learned. [Personal note: Present mode of testing is meaningless].

R. The attitude to simply pass the exam subdues that of genuine learning.

Y. Yes, merely an attitude of passing. Now for those who failed some arrangement of learning must be made before they re-take the second exam.

R. Not only the failures but also it is equally essential for those who passed.

Y. Of course for them too. I've no idea what the arrangements or the conditions are like. The educational administrators should consider to introduce other more effective programs that will enhance the intellectual capacity of teachers. [Note: Follow-up stressed]

R. Suppose you need 50 marks to pass. Then some would have scored 49 and some 51. What actually is the difference between the two? The only difference is one got 2 marks more than the other. But the implication would be that one is competent teacher and the other is not. [Personal note: I am not trying to down play the significance of examinations. But in the case of Radio participants the examiner would be someone external. He or she would not know the examinee personally. So, the marking would be very objective which may cause damage to the feelings of participants. The resource teacher on the other hand would know them a little better. His assessment would make more sense than that by the external examinations]

Y. Yes the marks sure would imply that.

R. Then what should have been the purpose of examination?

Y. Observations of practical experiences would make more sense. What I feel about this is that there should be one resource teacher in each group of 20 participants. It should be expected that the Resource Teacher is at least a B. Ed. as this level of study would have furnished him or her with the knowledge in the field of child psychology (pedagogy???). This particular teacher should be able to teach all the basic teaching methods and should always make an unbiased and unselfish judgements about teachers (an honest sense of

"otherness" towards teachers). Resource Teacher like Prakash should be the one who must mark the exam papers that the participants wrote in so called external examination or at least he should be consulted in marking those papers. He has a big role in this program. [Personal note: Need to reconsider the examination system]. In my group of Radio Education participants there was a very dedicated teacher. Lets not call his name. His participation was excellent, he did an excellent practice teaching, always attentive and hard working. Everyone were impressed with his work. But in the external examination he failed in English with a two mark too short. Furthermore, he has already passed I. A. (Intermediate in Arts). Why it did happen I have no idea. In such a situation what could be the role of the Resource Teacher, I wonder!

Theme: An isolated effort to train teachers: Sharing and learning from each others' experiences was not encouraged in the training program

R. Did you ever have opportunity to talk with other teachers about any teacher education program other than this one?

Y. No I didn't have any opportunity. I didn't know about any other program except a training on treating diarrhoea under health [education]. This training used to be conducted for a couple of days. Nothing else I know about any other teacher education program. I only did the 200 mark education course. That's all.

R. You don't know about the I. Ed. (Intermediate of Education) or B. Ed. (Bachelor of Education) programs?

Y. Are those about education [program]? I don't know much about them.

R. Has this Radio Education program helped improve your teaching skills?

Y. It certainly has.

R. Is the approach appropriate or could it be better with a different approach?

Y. With more practicals and seminars the program could prove to be more effective, without only confining it to Radio broadcasts. There is only half hour broadcast through radio. Together with this some other occasional activities of 2 - 4 days like seminars and discussion sessions might have been fruitful.

R. Are the activities included in the Radio program supportive to teachers' feelings? Or is it necessary to be so?

Y. They certainly should have been so which would make the program more effective. As I said earlier, about time and about examination. They have included as many as 8 subjects the knowledge of which would be tested in two days. Had they given some time to think, study and prepare and conducted the exams in reasonable times it would have made more sense. In fact, the examination itself is not a main thing. Your experiences count most because this is a practice we are involved in. [Personal note: Critique of the "ritualization"]

The Topics Identified in the First Conversation with Yog

1. Many children walk to school more than 2 hours. There are children who stay hungry the whole day at the school. (p. 2)[1]

2. Teachers are aware of such conditions of the children yet they are bound to work according to the curricular objectives. It is impossible to achieve the objectives in such a context. (pp. 2-5)

3. Lack of communication between teachers and parents. Lack of interest among parents towards school and schooling. (p. 6)

4. The teaching profession has provided hope for academically unsuccessful individuals to become teachers. This was the only choice, for his personal/familial reasons, available for Yog. (pp. 1, 8, 10)

5. The teaching profession is more challenging than Civil Service. There is no time for teachers to pursue further education and professional development. (pp. 8-9)

6. Yog cannot think of leaving the teaching job for another one. (pp. 9-11)

7. Problem of basic needs for effective teaching.

   - The school's physical condition (pp. 13, 31, 33, 42, 43)

   - The teachers' professional competency to establish relationship with children (p. 13, 32-34)

   - The students' personal conditions (pp. 13-14, 25-28)

8. Extremely poor economic condition of the children. Yog sees this as the main reason for the failure in meeting curricular objectives. [the children are required to be fit for the curriculum, but not vice versa] (pp. 14-15)

9. Teachers do not have resources and capacity to shorten the gap between children's reality and curriculum. Although the training had been helpful for developing teaching skills, it had not helped minimize the problem. (pp. 15-17)

10. The children have participated in their learning practices with whatever capacity they have, although however unsuccessful they are in achieving the curricular objectives. How should one view their effort? As long as their achievements are measured with the yard stick of national standard, the meaning of their achievements will have no significance. (pp. 21-24)

11. The theoretical aspect that Yog learned in the radio program is incompatible in practice. (pp. 35-37, 42-43)

12. The changes that the radio program made were not based on the learners' reality. They were made for administrative convenience. (pp. 38-40)

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[1]The page numbers are from the original manuscript of the conversation text.

13. Although the radio training program includes basic theoretical concepts of teaching, teachers are bound to teach in their own pace and method. (pp. 43-47)

14. The uniqueness of Yog's context does not get any consideration in the radio program. (p. 45)

15. The program provides opportunities for acquiring the knowledge of basic teaching skills. (p. 46)

16. The program intends to make teachers effective—capable of teaching with modern techniques, develop and make use of teaching materials. (p. 49)

17. Teaching is not only work that teachers should rely on for their living. They also must engage in other income earning activities. (p. 50)

18. Teachers do not have dignified social status. (50-54)

19. Given the present status of teachers or the teaching profession, one cannot expect to see any significant improvement in the educational system. (pp. 54-55)

20. The people who developed the radio program might have experienced the practical difficulties of teachers and students. But the solutions it prescribed are not practical. For example, the suggestion that teachers should use locally available materials for their instruction may not make any sense in a context where teachers are not motivated towards the profession. (pp. 56-57)

21. While the basic intents of the program might have been good, the activities that are carried out are superficial. For example, the learners are evaluated in a very lucid way and the examinations are conducted merely for the purpose of examination and administrative convenience but not for the purpose of improvements. Teachers are evaluated more by external examinations. (pp. 58-60, 73-77)

22. The radio-based BTT program presents itself as a package for teachers to accept it uncritically. (pp. 60-62).

Appendix C

SUMMARY OF THE BROADCAST OF A SAMPLE UNIT OF THE RADIO-BASED BTT PROGRAM

Date: December 6, 1992
Time: 5:47 to 6:00PM
Subject: Health Education
Units: 6 (Model Teaching)
Topic: Personal Hygiene

Following the broadcast of unit five in the first half of the program number 31 the radio program continues with the 4-minute broadcast of the "Magazine Show" before starting the second half of the program with unit six.

Unit six starts with the statement of the behavioral objective of the unit. It says: "After listening today's unit you will be able to teach effectively topics related to personal health and hygiene."

Following the statement of the objective the host of the program announces that there will be a discussion between Kaka (a typical way of addressing an elderly person in a village community) and Masternani (the way teachers are typically addressed by the elderly people). Kaka comes to Masternani's room seeking help to extract a thorn out of his finger. She helps him extract the thorn using proper equipment such as a nail cutter, a needle, and a tweezer. Masternani takes this opportunity to explain the importance of cutting the finger nails for cleanliness and personal hygiene. Kaka argues the convenience of having long finger nails but Masternani highlights the unhealthy aspect of long nails and insists on regularly cutting them. She concludes the talk indicating that she has to go to school where she wishes to observe Ramesh Jee's classroom teaching.

The broadcast switches to the discussion between Masternani and Ramesh. Masternani starts the discussion with a question whether Ramesh has prepared a lesson plan for this morning's classroom teaching. Ramesh who addresses the lady as Miss (a typical way of addressing female teachers) and indicates that he has the lesson plan ready. He says he intends to teach why human beings need to wear cloths according to the season. They both proceed to the classroom.

Ramesh starts teaching. The classroom appears to be a scenario where about five children are taking turns to respond to the questions asked by the teacher. It appears that the children are speaking according to specific directions. There has been an extensive demonstration of a questioning technique and use of instructional materials. After the class

Masternani commends Ramesh Jee for the effective teaching. Ramesh asks if she is willing to go back to the office to discuss the lesson. But Masternani finds it difficult because of the lack of time. At this point the broadcast lesson on Health Education Unit Six concludes.

The host announces what the next unit will be on before concluding that day's program.

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